

Compatability Factor

by Allronix

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Summary: When Jadzia is faced with an arranged marriage, will she choose love or duty?

Compatability Factor

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"Compatibility Factor"

By Jessica Marie Krucek

The usual warnings apply. Characters are Paramount, situation mine.

Critiques appreciated

- The Allronix

Part 1

Past Hopes

"Baby thinks she's smart, but what about her heart?"

-Laura Brannigan "The Lucky One"

Jadzia straightened out her pale yellow robe, and straightened the band of matching gold silk in her hair. *Initiate...I've made it to

Initiate. Laurin never made it this far...*

There was a knock on the door. "Hey, little *kejo*, answer the door. I want to see the newest Initiate on Trill!"

Jadzia shook her head. Laurin would always call her "little" even

though she towered over Laurin by a head and a half.

"Easy, Laurin. I'll be right there."

Tearing herself away from the mirror, Jadzia ordered the room's

computer to open the door. Laurin toddled into the room. Her belly was

already beginning to show underneath her shirt.

Five months down, five to go... thought Jadzia. *An

aunt...maybe Laurin's child will have a Joined aunt...Oh, All Gods

Joined and Unjoined, what a blessing for a household!*

"Laurin, can I find you a chair?" Jadzia asked.

"No, *kejo,* I'm fine. How about you? Can the proud Initiate give

her sister a hug?"

"Of course," Jadzia said, wrapping her arms around Laurin's

waist. "Oh, it's been so long since I've seen anything but the

school..."

"Well, the Board wants only the best to be Joined. Only the

smartest, strongest, and most controlled. That's why the Joined are so

good. They are to rule over those of us who aren't as bright or as

controlled." Laurin said, stepping back to admire her younger sister's

golden robes. "When Mother and Father see this..."

"Mother? What about Grandfather? He'll want to start planning my

Transition Festival. I'm not sure if I'll even be Joined yet, but you

know Grandfather..."

"Well, he does get excited easily, and since you are the first

Initiate in the family..." Laurin's eyes glittered like emerald.

"I haven't see them for three months!" Jadzia said, sighing and

plopping her lanky body on her bed. "Sometimes I just wish I could

leave here and go home!"

"And give up your chance to be Joined?" Laurin said. "Jadzia, you

said that you wanted this!"

"I do, but all I do is study, training, religious

services...Everyone here is competing. You have it better."

"With no chance to become anything better than owner of Mother's

jewelry shop? Jadzia, I may have a beautiful life, but you...You could

be Joined to the Monarch's symbiont for all we know! Think of it, being

a parent of society, helping all of us short-sighted Unjoineds..."

"It is such an honor, Laurin. I'm not sure that I'm even worthy."

"Well, all of us believe you're worthy. Mother, Father,

Grandfather, and I - we all sponsored you because we believe you are

worthy."

Jadzia smiled weakly. "Thank you."

The door hissed open. Aquin Dolax, Jadzia's instructor, stood in the doorway. He was a tall, big-boned man, and his cool gray eyes and

poise always made Jadzia feel awkward in comparison. He stared down at

Laurin. "Please step out of the room, and go to the waiting area. The

Candidate and I need to speak."

Laurin rose and bowed her head in respect to him. "Yes, Parent,"

she said, using the formal term of respect when addressing a Joined.

She looked behind her. "I'll come back later, *kejo.*"

Jadzia lowered her eyes, and spoke quietly. "Master Dolax..."

"Why be so quiet? You know that confidence counts for you when

speaking to the Board."

"Yes, Master," Jadzia said. "But it's hard not to get intimidated by them."

"Are you frightened by me?" Dolax asked. "There is no reason to be. You are an Initiate now - almost there."

"It all...I just don't know whether..." she looked shyly away from the calm, wise master.

"You aren't sure why the Board chose you to go on, while leaving

many of your friends behind?"

"Especially Gabel. He was so brilliant, and when he didn't get

Initiated..." her voice trailed off and choked. Dolax watched her

intently, with irritation.

"*Haj!* You are an Initiate now. Remember your control!"

He was pleased to see her take a few deep breaths and center

herself. "I'm sorry. He was a close friend, and when he killed

himself..."

"It is a tragedy, but an unavoidable one. We cut him because his

emotional control was not what it should be. His inability to accept

the decision of the Board was what killed him, not the decision

itself."

Jadzia frowned. "I don't understand why it isn't preventable. So

many good people die..."

"You are Unjoined, and untrained in some areas. Hopefully, you will understand why some choose to die rather than accept the decision

of the Parents."

"Maybe..." she whispered. "Why are you here, Master Dolax?"

"The Board has informed me that you are to be *j'fall'an*

-

bonded."

Jadzia's heart fell to her knees - *j'fall'an* - bonded by the

Board's arrangement. A husband to be chosen by the Parents of the

Society themselves.

"Who is he?" she whispered, terrified. "What if he is a bad

person?"

"Well, the Board did all the necessary personality profiles, and

testing. There's a 90% chance that all your children would be eligible

for Joining if the two of you are wedded. Won't that be wonderful?"

"What if one of us is Joined? Or neither?"

"Well if both of you are Joined, the Bonding goes forward. If only one of you is...Well, it's canceled."

She nodded. To be *j'fall'an* was to be among the best of all

Initiates - the bonding was designed to produce a generation of

children even more suited to be Honored..."A big honor...to have the

arrangement. All this at once..."

"You will get used to it, Initiate," Dolax had a small smile on his face. "Teldar is just as nervous as you are. I told him to..."

The door slid open. Wearing identical gold robes was a nervous young man. His unruly mop of brown-red curls seemed to refuse any

taming a comb might give it. He ran his fingers through it in an

attempt to keep it out of his face. Dolax stood up and Jadzia also rose

from the bed.

"Ah, Teldar. I see that you got your robes also."

Teldar smiled shyly. "Yes, Master Dolax. Is...she..."

Dolax nodded. "A perfect match, don't you think?"

"I don't know," he whispered. He approached her slowly. "Dolax told me that your name is Jadzia."

"Yes," she said, already backing up reflectively, the both of them looking to Dolax for some signal as to what was to happen. Dolax

only laughed.

"Don't look to me, Initiates. Get to know each other! You are to

spend the rest of your lives together!"

With that, Dolax vanished out the door.

For a long time, they were silent. Jadzia found the nerve to

speak first. "Teldar, did Dolax tell you that we are *j'fall'an*?"

Teldar nodded. "I didn't know what to say. I mean, it's an honor

that not even a lot of Joineds even get. Why us?"

"Dolax said the Board matched us...that if we were married, our

children would be eligible for the Program."

"When are they expecting us..." Teldar gulped. "When are they

expecting us to be bonded?"

"After Joining," said Jadzia quietly. "If both of us are Joined."

Teldar smiled gently. "You dreaming about your Joining Day, or what it's like to *be* Joined?"

"Sometimes," Jadzia said. "Sometimes, I look at Master Dolax and

envy his control and sometimes I dream about being one of the people on

the Board, or having a whole laboratory to myself - one with an

observatory - so I can perform the work I want to, and gaze at the

stars all night! I'm fascinated with Astrophysics."

"A Scientist-scholar," said Teldar. "Actually, I'm a

Physician-scholar."

"Really?" Jadzia asked. "Well, biology is not my favorite thing to study."

"Well, Astrophysics is not my favorite subject either. Maybe we can help each other. After all, that will help things along if we both

get Joined."

Jadzia reached out and took Teldar's hand. "I'd like that...I'd like that very much."

Teldar smiled gently, his large brown eyes meeting

hers..."*j'fall'an* - kind of a nice ring to it..."

From netcom.com!ix.netcom.com!netnews Tue Nov 28 16:10:49 1995

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Path: netcom.com!ix.netcom.com!netnews

From: allronix@ix.netcom.com (Jessica Krucek)

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Part Two

Present Situation

"All my instincts, they return

And the grand facade so soon will burn

Without a noise, without my pride

I reach out from the inside..."

-Peter Gabriel "Your Eyes"

"Concentrate. Deep breath in...hold it...now out. Slowly..."

She studied him. He was struggling a bit, but still making progress.

"Still a little shallow. Now a *deep* breath this time..."

He drew in a large breath this time. "Okay, good," she said.
"Now

hold it."

He kept his body rigid. Jadzia shook her head. "No, don't tense up. Come on, this is a lesson in concentration. Now, exhale. Slowly

this time.

He exhaled slowly and evenly, his slender frame relaxing, the broad shoulders slumping slightly.

"Try again. Deep breath...that's it...Don't tense...Easy...That's

it...Good, you're learning."

He repeated the pattern, responding to her voice.

"Now, open your eyes."

One green-brown eye opened and glowered at her. "Jadzia..."

"You're ready for it. Come on, I want to see if you can maintain

your concentration. Try it."

The human sighed. "You'll be the death of me yet."

"Come on, Julian. You've got it with your eyes closed. I just want to increase the difficulty. Try it. Look at my finger." She raised

one slender finger in the air and held it out directly in front of

Julian's nose. "Now, breathe."

He sighed, then fixed his gaze on her finger. Deep breaths in, hold it for a second, then slowly out. Keep up the rhythm. His eyelids

grew heavy.

"Don't close them. Keep your eyes open."

Julian's concentration was broken. "Sorry, Dax. I think I'm trying too hard."

"And I think I've pushed you hard enough for today. I'm acting like a field dossent."

She untangled her crossed legs, then pulled Julian to his feet.

"I'm not getting it, am I?" he asked in frustration.

Jadzia smiled. "Don't worry about it. It takes years to train it

into Initiates, and considering that humans aren't exactly taught this

type of control from childhood, you're doing fine. Benjamin never had

much interest in control, even though Curzon was trying his hardest.

I've never met a human who had this much interest in learning *gon'mal*

meditation and breath control."

"You know my initial reason *wasn't* control." A devilish green

glitter lit his brown eyes.

"Yes." she said casually, straightening out her shirt. "That's why I never invited you to my quarters until I was sure you had

grown

out of trying to seduce me."

"Not that I had much of a chance," Julian said with
mocking

theatricality. "Your beauty is stunning, but your mind was much
more

powerful than my own. It was never meant to be between us, so
I

resigned myself to being your pupil rather than your suitor."

"As it should be." Jadzia was grinning.

Julian shook his head. "Thank you, Jadzia. I mean it.
Your

friendship is worth a lot to me. I never thought I'd say this, but
I'm

glad it's turned out the way it has."

She hugged him lightly. "I know. So am I."

He broke off the hug. "I have to go. There's some paperwork I
have to look over. See you tomorrow. Good night."

"Good night."

As soon as the door hissed behind Julian, Jadzia heard
the

chattering that came over the station computer. "Incoming message
for

Commander Dax."

Walking over to the terminal on her table, Jadzia punched up
the

message.

** To: Lt. Commander Jadzia Dax

From: Mentor Aquin Dolax - Trill Symbiosis Board**

Jadzia tensed. Aquin Dolax. The last time she had seen him was
right before she was Joined. He was opposed to her re-entering
the

program on the basis Curzon had cited - emotional disorder, but
Curzon

had thrown his weight around and recanted his petition to drop
her.

Only recently had she figured out why he had dropped her in the first

place, and to an extent, she still hadn't assimilated all of that

aspect of Curzon quite yet.

****Commander Dax:**

I have already congratulated you on your Joining Day. I trust your experiences as a Joined Trill have proved insightful. Now, it is

time to accept another responsibility. I have come to inform you that

Teldar Sobel has completed his **Ergan** and is booking transport on a

Bajoran passenger ship. Put all your affairs in order. After your

j'fall'an bond has been honored, you will return to Trillian for the

next phase of your duty.

My Blessings, and those of the Joined Gods Kele and Tosa go with

you.

- Aquin Dolax**

Jadzia felt her knees go out from under her. Not now! Not when she had found a place she was happy with, a life.

At the same time she was elated. Teldar! She hadn't seen him since they were both Initiates, and Sobel... the attached record said

that Sobel was a little younger than Dax, but still a brilliant

biologist. Teldar Sobel...Teldar Sobel. What was he going to be like?

Teldar and Jadzia had been so close, looking forward to being Joined,

and then Bonded. She had all but given up hope of seeing him again!

Immediately, Jadzia concentrated on controlling this mix of

emotions - anticipation mixed with apprehension, resentment mixed with

honor, joy and horror - all swirling about her minds.

Only one person knew that she was completing her *Ergan* - the first stage of life as a Parent of Society. The time where a Joined

accepted what they were, faced themselves, and started in their

lifetime professions to start a life for themselves and of themselves.

That stage ended with the *jantara,* the confronting of their past

selves. Jadzia had undergone her *jantara* only five months before.

There was someone she would have to tell about this - the only

person here that could understand the depth of the *j'fall'an*

responsibility, and the reason she had to go back home to Trillian.

Walking into his quarters, the dark-skinned human looked up from the PADD he had been reading. Upon seeing the befuddled expression on

his science officer's face, he gestured to a seat.

"What can I help you with Dax?" he asked.

"Benjamin, I just got a message from Aquin Dolax on the Symbiosis

Board."

"Congratulating you on finishing your *Ergan* training, and telling you about Teldar Sobel."

"How did you know?"

Ben cracked his knuckles in contemplation. "Mentor Dolax sent me a subspace message, knowing that I'm your commanding officer. He told

me that Teldar Sobel and you were *j'fall'an.*"

She looked to the floor. "Yes, and you, of everyone on the

station, has the best understanding of what that means."

"Only because I heard Curzon swear about it enough times."

"Benjamin," she said. "This is a very big honor."

"Who among your Hosts was *j'fall'an?*"

"Ardrea, Leeta, Torias - and Jadzia," she said dully.
"All

j'fall'an. That's more than average. Usually, a symbiont is joined to
a

j'fall'an Host twice, maybe three times."

Ben whistled. "I'm betting that you're going to honor the
bond."

Jadzia nodded. "It's my duty to my people. That's something
I've

been neglecting for too long."

"So you want to get married to him?"

"That's what I'm obligated to do. It's something I have to do as
a Joined."

She sighed. "I've been disobedient. For two lives, I've bent
rules, broke rules, dishonored myself and my homeworld. I can't
keep

disobeying my people. I have to accept the truth - the truth of
my

training and my world. If I don't accept this honor, there's a
good

chance that I'll be Disgraced, and that can be much worse than
exile."

Benjamin muttered. "Disgrace means you actually have to face
the

Board, that you actually have to listen in silence while they strip
you

of your status. From that moment on, your words are considered
lies."

Ben shook his head. "That alone was enough to scare Curzon."

Jadzia concurred. "And for the rest of that lifetime, at least,
you are not even considered Joined. Even a temple of the Joined Gods
is

closed off. In order to be considered for a future Host, I'd have to go

through Initiate-style training again!" Throwing up her hands, Jadzia

admitted. "I know someone who was Disgraced. She told me later that she

would have taken exile over it. The only home she has is the Peliar Zel

moons."

Ben frowned. "That place is out in the middle of nowhere. What did she do?"

"She was Joined off-world. When she came to Trillian to announce

herself before the Board, she brought with her some ideas that the

Board considered heretical. She spoke out against the way Initiates

were trained, the high suicide rate...She also talked about marriages

to off-worlders - only the Unjoined have the freedom to do that, and

they don't have the Board's blessing. The children are considered

off-worlders. The Board and Guardian-Priests decided that her acts were

terrible enough to warrant Disgrace."

"Curzon considered the Board to be the highest truth. If you still believe in that wisdom, than I'll be happy to stand with you and

your *j'fall'an.*"

Jadzia blushed. "Will you take the place of Tosa?"

Benjamin was shocked. "As in stand by and help officiate? I'm

flattered."

She put her hands on his shoulders in a proud, but totally

unprofessional way. "Thank you, Benjamin."

* * * *

"Married?" asked Kira Nerys as she stared, dumbfounded. "To who?"

"Teldar Sobel. Teldar and I were Initiates at the same school. We

spent so much time together. I'm just amazed that he's actually come. I

had all but given up on the *j'fall'an* bond until Master Dolax

contacted me."

"But, Dax," whispered Nerys. "You don't *know* what he's like, do

you?"

"I know Teldar, and I've been looking at Sobel's file all afternoon. Sobel's a little younger than Dax. Teldar is Sobel's fifth

Host. Brilliant biologist, and Teldar is a -"

"Is this place taken?"

Both women looked up. The human's odd accent nailed down his

identity.

Nerys gestured to the seat. "Go ahead, Julian."

Julian put his plate of food on the table and slid into the seat.

Both women were giggling.

"What?" asked Julian. "Do I have something spilled on the front of my uniform?"

"Do you want me to tell him the good news, or are you going to tell him?" Nerys said, grinning conspiratorily at Jadzia.

"What good news is that?"

Jadzia smiled shyly. "I'm getting married."

A moment ago, the beef stew in Julian's bowl was delicious. The

instant she spoke, though, it became every bit as delicious as a

plateful of beets.

"Really?" he managed to choke out. "Who is he?"

"Teldar Sobel."

Julian shook his head in amazement. "As in *Doctor* Teldar Sobel?"

The genetisist?"

"You've met him?" asked Nerys.

"No, but I've read his work...He's done some absolutely fascinating research on genetic inheritance."

Jadzia smiled. "I think you and he will get along wonderfully."

Julian cleared his throat, still roiling in shock. "I'm sure we

will. Congratualtions."

Nerys looked back toward her Trill friend. "So, Jadzia, what does

j'fall'an mean? Engaged?"

"More than that. It's an honor - an honor that not even most

Joineds achieve. *J'fall'an,* literally translated, means 'rebuilder.'

There's a legend that after the Disaster, the whole population reverted

to barbarism. The Disaster polluted the world, and people blamed each

other. There was war, terror, disease. Over half of all life on Trill

was wiped out."

"That's not much of a legend," Julian said, pushing the pieces of

meat around in his bowl with a fork. "According to what I've read about

your planet's history, the pollutants in the atmosphere, soil, and

water nearly rendered the whole planet unliveable. It's amazing how

your people were able to climb out of it."

"That's where the legend kicks in," Jadzia said. "According to the legend, the Joined Gods Kele and Tosa picked two young rulers, the first *j'fall'an,* from warring islands. They had never met each other, never spoke, but Kele and Tosa knew that of everyone on Trillian, they were the best match. Taking them to the mountain which is now the capital city, Kele and Tosa married them. Their children became the Ten Monarchs - the Great Joined Monarchs that united Trill under their rule."

"And now?" asked Julian, swallowing a mouthful of the now-cold stew.

"And now, some very honored Initiates are chosen to continue that reconstruction. Including Teldar and I."

"You must be very proud," said Nerys.

"Actually," said Jadzia. "I'm nervous. I'm just wondering what he's going to be like...What I'm going to seem like to him. We're both

Joined now, and we haven't seen each other since we were Initiates. I

think the last time I saw him was when he wished me good luck when I

went off to field training with Curzon..."

"He is in for a shock," said Julian. "Best of luck...to both of

you."

Julian didn't say anything else for the rest of the meal. He sat

back, listening to Nerys and Jadzia talk eagerly about Teldar Sobel.

Jadzia told Nerys all about the time she and Teldar shared as

Initiates, and how glad she was to finally see him.

Julian couldn't place the reason why he felt so detached. This all seemed so unreal for some reason, as though he really wasn't

sitting with the women. His mind felt as if it were underwater, and the

sound of blood roaring in his ears was much louder than the noise of

the Promenade.

"Excuse me," said Julian. "I have to attend to something in the

Infirmary. I will see you later. Again, Jadzia, congratulations."

Julian walked towards the Infirmary in a trance, his mind a

completely incomprehensible brew of strong emotions, half-formed

memories, and an almost audible breaking sound - the sound of shattered

perceptions.

It was a busy day today, and that helped Julian focus his mind on

something besides the chaos. Somedays, it **was** a blessing to be the

only doctor on the station.

A technician had suffered severe injuries from a fall. She was

trying to weld a railing when the whole catwalk she stood on gave away.

Fortunately, she had gotten medical attention in time.

Then, a ship full of Andorian traders came in. A quarter of the crew had come down with a nasty bug they picked up on the jungle planet

of Hulaga Prime. Julian was put to work assisting a series of

vaccinations for the healthy, and replicating serum and a treatment

schedule for those who were ill. The medical apprentice on the trade

ship was quite grateful for someone more experienced than himself to

help with the outbreak, since the ship's doctor was among the first

victims of the plague.

But after hours, the situation was brought under some control.

The Andorian medic had things under some semblance of control. Julian

was to check on them for a few days, and the medic was to let him know

if the treatment didn't "take." Judging from the initial round of

vaccinations and serum, though, it looked like it would.

The Infirmary calmed down, and he was relieved of duty.

Staggering back to his quarters with a bone-weariness he hadn't felt in

ages, Julian collapsed on his bed, and just stared up at the ceiling.

Nights like this, he was grateful that Jadzia was teaching him those meditative techniques. Breathe, hold, exhale...clear your mind.

But he couldn't breathe deeply without his breath sounding

jagged. He couldn't hold his breath without tensing, and when he

exhaled, it sounded like a soft sob.

No...not that...She was his *friend,* he should share her joy.

This was wrong, childish. She had told him. Only two days ago, he had

told her that he was glad to have put those feelings past him. He'd

even told the Leythian that he was over her, that while she held a

special place in his heart, those feelings would never use him.

Had he lied to himself?

Deep breath in...hold it...out slowly...jagged gasp, tense,

sob.

*Stop it. It's not like she's going to leave...it's not as if she

will stop being your friend. It's not like it was on Meridian, where

you'd never see her again. Stop it, Julian!*

Getting up, and walking out to the living room, he got a cup of tea from the replicator. Sipping it slowly, he sank into the comfort of

his favorite chair.

He glanced over to the shelf, to the holo. She was smiling, smiling for eternity. Her sun-blond hair pulled back into a ponytail.

She had been passionate, sensual, committed to the moment, almost

nihilistic in her philosophy of life. Her ingenue features, the soft

curves of her body, her grey eyes...Gods of the Universe! She was the

opposite of Jadzia in every way.

This woman belonged in the past, to a different life, a different

Julian Bashir. Once he had set foot onto the ship coming to DS9, he

started a new life, away from Earth, away from the failures of his

past, away from Palis.

His first memory of the life he led now was of Jadzia - her

smile when he introduced himself. She had seen him through the terrible

confusion that ruled him through the first year, saw right through the

cocky facade that worked wonders for casual dates and annoyed the hell

out of everyone else.

What would Jadzia say if Palis showed up out of the blue? For that matter, would Julian find that he no longer had anything in

common

with his former fiancée?

Julian got up and punched up the manifest of incoming ships.

Finding the one Jadzia had mentioned that Teldar Sobel was arriving on,

Julian decided to face his fear...

From netcom.com!ix.netcom.com!netnews Tue Nov 28 16:10:53 1995

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From: allronix@ix.netcom.com (Jessica Krucek)

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Subject: "Compatability Factor" (DS9, J/J PG-13) 3/9

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Organization: Netcom

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NNTP-Posting-Host: ix-oly-wal-23.ix.netcom.com

X-NETCOM-Date: Mon Nov 27 9:43:54 PM PST 1995

Part 3

Arrival of the Rival

"You know I feel so dirty when they start talkin' cute. I want to

tell her that I love her, but the point is probably moot."

- Rick Springfield "Jesse's Girl"

As soon as the Trill man stepped out from the airlock, Julian was

waiting for him.

"Teldar Sobel," Julian said as warmly as he could manage.

"Welcome to Deep Space Nine."

The Trill man looked up. "Who are you?"

"Julian Bashir. The station's doctor."

Teldar nodded coolly. "Ah, yes. I heard about you. Nominated

for

last year's Carrington?"

"Why, yes."

Teldar appraised him. "You seem a little young. How did you get

nominated?"

Julian smiled. "Dax sent my work to a friend of hers on the medical board. Things snowballed from there."

"Really?" said Teldar.

"I read your paper on Vulcan telepathic abilities some months ago. Fascinating stuff."

Teldar's smile was diplomatic, forced - the type Julian had seen too many times. "I was afraid that no one off Vulcan would be able to

comprehend it. I'm living on Trill right now, but the Science Academy

has offered me a post. I'd have to turn down a seat on the Symbiosis

Commission, but..."

"The Science Academy. Quite an honor."

"Well, I've only had two goals in my life - one was to be Joined,

the other was discover something groundbreaking."

"Anything 'groundbreaking' that you're working on right now? I would be glad to offer my assistance."

Teldar appraised the human. "I'm working on a study for the

Symbiosis Commission, should prove beyond a doubt that *j'fall'an*

bonds are building a brighter future for Trill."

"*J'Fallan?*" Julian's mouth suddenly felt as though it was full of cotton. "As in the marriage that the Board is sanctioning between

you and Jadzia?"

Teldar nodded stiffly. "And is my *'j'fall'an* your friend?"

"Yes," said Julian proudly. "A very close friend."

"How close?" said Teldar suspiciously.

Before Julian could answer, the men heard a voice behind them.

"Ah, there you are."

They turned around. Jadzia all but ran up to Teldar and hugged him. A bit shyly, Teldar returned her hug.

"Oh, it's been too long, Teldar. I was beginning to think I'd never see you!"

Teldar eyed the human standing near them. "Jadzia, I don't think

this display of affection is appropriate, especially in the presence of

one of your students."

Jadzia smiled at Teldar. "Oh, Julian? He's a friend of mine.

Nothing to worry about."

"I see," said Teldar, breaking off the embrace. "Well, I'll need to learn all about your new life. We haven't seen each other since

Initiate training, and since we are going to spend the rest of our

lives together..."

Jadzia laughed. "You're right, Teldar. Why don't I start by showing you around Quark's...?"

The two of them walked off, holding hands, but otherwise behaving in a rather un-loverlike way. Watching after the two of them stirred a

strange mix of emotions in Julian. He could almost feel his friend's

joy at her reunion with her fiancée, but that was overshadowed with a

heavy dose of envy.

*Come on, Julian. You shouldn't feel that way. You've told yourself time and again that you don't see her that way any

longer.

That in becoming her friend, you've lost your interest in luring her

into your bed.*

And something made him uneasy about Teldar. Julian walked away,

telling himself that it was only his own jealousy in the way.

His quarters. He needed time to think, to accept this new man in his friend's life.

Walking in his quarters, Julian collapsed into a chair, and

looked out to the stars. These stars were his home now, Earth no

longer was. Earth was a place where he no longer belonged, full of

shattered dreams and bad memories. Here, he could be safe from his

past. Here, no one had to know. Here, everyone assumed things, and

Julian let them have their assumptions. He laughed with the irony.

Listening to their assumptions...why, for all Garak's reputation as the

man with the mystery past, how little they knew about him, the open,

friendly Julian...They knew more facts about Garak's past than they did

Julian's.

The small reminders of his life before this station were nothing

but trinkets on a shelf. The small flower encased in crystal which

could have saved a small girl on Invernica 2, given to him by Michael

(that blackguard didn't deserve the title of "father"). The chip

containing letters from his mother, who vanished without a trace...

And the small holo of her. Julian got out of his chair, and

picked it up.

He brushed his fingers over the holo. Four years since he left

Earth, since he left her...He could understand. After all, there was a

part of him that wanted to stay on Earth. Some nights, she still

haunted his dreams...

"Computer," he said dully. "Dance of the Sugarplum Fairy."

The music poured into the room, but didn't fill it. The sweet,

tinkling music box melody had been his favorite...no, *their* favorite.

She had been Clara that year. At closing night, he had burst

backstage with a dozen roses and a bottle of the finest red wine San

Francisco could offer. It was the equivalent of his stipend for the

month - and the money Michael had given him as "compensation" for

writing Julian out of the family for good...The diamonds and rubies had

been fashioned into a rose design...Roses being her favorite thing in

this world.

The words echoed cruelly in Julian's ears. Getting down on one knee in front of the entire troupe, proposing marriage to the star

ballerina, and her acceptance.

Then, the day it shattered - the day he begged her to marry the

officer he was, and her cold refusal - of how he promised to find an

assignment near Earth to be with her, and of how cold she had become

toward the dream that he thought she shared with him...

"I don't want you to give up your dream, Palis...Please, I

don't

want to give up mine. I'll stay on Earth...I'll take a research

grant...Palis, no! Please, don't leave me...I love you...I always

will..."*

But she never listened, she pushed him outside her family mansion, throwing the ring out with him.

The next few days were a blur. Mixing up a postganglionic nerve for a preganglionic fiber and watching his secret rival, Elizabeth

Lense, take what he had worked so hard for...Michael making good on his

word and not being there, except as a subspace message saying "You

failed again". "Celebrating" with his classmates and getting so utterly

drunk that he took a woman into his bed without even knowing her

name...And when Palis showed up the next day to apologize and take him

back, all she saw was that nameless woman...

*Just face it, Julian. You are so worthless...What makes you think you're worth anything but more of those faceless women? You lost

your chance, the chance to love someone for a lifetime...*

Julian put the holo on the table next to him, then rested his head in his hands while his inner demon continued to scream at him...

*This is all you have left...You are an officer. Are you happy?

You bellowed to Michael before he disowned you that you'd be first in

your class...Always promising, but falling short of your promises.

Teldar is a much better man than you. He has accomplished what he

promised. He deserves the honor of loving Jadzia for a lifetime.*

He pulled his hands from his face, and noticed with detached wonder that the heels of his hands were wet where he had put them against his eyes.

"And here," said Jadzia, "Are my quarters."

Teldar looked around the room, feeling the cushions on the couch,

and admiring the hangings on the wall. "I like it. It looks

comfortable."

"The beds here take a bit of getting used to. This place used to be a Cardassian outpost, and a Cardassian's idea of "comfortable" is a

little different than what you're probably used to. Almost like the

Initiate school's mattresses. Remember how hard those mattresses were?

Remember that we always went out behind the groundskeeper's shed?"

Teldar shook his head. "We were children then. That was so long ago. We're adults now. We don't have to slink around and try to hide."

Jadzia's mouth turned into a wide, evil smile as she sat close to

Teldar on the couch. "Well, we only thought we were keeping the real

nature of those 'overnight study sessions' to ourselves. We really

weren't fooling anyone."

Teldar became annoyed. "Jadzia, I was being serious. The way we

acted..."

"Was perfectly normal for a couple of adolescents, especially ones

who were preparing to spend a life together. You used to be so

infatuated with the concept." She mussed the too-tidy mop of

red-brown

curls on his forehead.

"We can't just pick up where we left off!" said Teldar. "We have a lot to cover. We're not Initiates any more. We are different people now."

"Well, I'll admit, Jadzia never attacked you, but you'd be surprised at what I am now."

"You certainly are unusual for being Joined," Teldar said. "I was

hoping you'd be a little more sedate." He laughed. "Not that you

weren't sedate as an Initiate. You were so shy. It's amazing seeing you

like this!"

"Well, Dax is notorious for being a bit of a loose cannon."

"'Loose cannon?'"

"A phrase Benjamin taught me. He's a long-time student. Curzon found him as an ensign..."

"Your previous Host?" Teldar's jaw was nearly scraping the floor.

"That's a form of reassociation, isn't it?"

"Not if he's my student. That's what the duty of a Joined is - to

teach. It's just that now, we're learning from each other. I think that

was the way it always worked."

Teldar shook his head. "I'm *j'fall'an* to a madwoman."

Jadzia smiled. "Oh, come on, Teldar. You were always the crazy one. Remember when you played that trick on Master Dolax by pretending

to have taken poison? The doctors almost had to find a new Host since

Aquin was close to having a heart attack right there!"

Teldar looked away. "I almost wonder why I was Joined after

stunts like that."

Jadzia took his shoulder. "The important part is you're here,

Teldar, and that we're going to stay together this time. I want to know

everything about what you are now. I read the record on Sobel, and I'm

sure you've looked up Dax, but records don't tell me very much."

Placing his hands on her shoulders, Teldar looked her over

slowly, remembering. "Joined Gods...You are beautiful, *j'fall'an,*

even more than I remembered. In a way, it's almost like no time has

passed." He sighed. "But we're so different. Jadzia Dax is going to

take quite a bit of getting used to."

She kissed his cheek. "As will Teldar Sobel, but I think we can

manage."

He smiled. "And this Cardassian station has been your home for the past four years. Do you like it here?"

She nodded. "Yes. Here...You know, for all the lives Dax has lived, how many places I've been...I don't think I've ever been more at

peace with myself, more 'at home,' than I am here."

"Then you wouldn't consider coming back to Trillian with me...to

start a family?"

Jadzia looked down. "That is the purpose of the *j'fall'an* bond,

isn't it?"

"It's the will of the Monarchs, the Board, Kele, and Tosa. Our duty is to Trillian. After we get the family started, we can go back.

I'd be more than happy to come here to continue my research."

"But you're going to be on the Symbiosis Commission."

For an instant, Teldar tensed, as if he was about to say something upsetting. His training snapped into place, and he relaxed.

"I'm not...completely committed. I have been offered a seat, but I can

do without it. I can work anywhere, I suppose. And I hear Bajor is a

beautiful world."

"Right now, it's still recovering. The Cardassians did a lot of

damage to it. Someday, it will be beautiful again. Here, we're offering

as much as help as we can. I really have to show you the Cliffs of

Defiance...there's nothing that steep on Trill! Talk about a challenge

for rockclimbing! I was on this project with some Bajoran scientists to

help replant some of the native life that was there before the

Cardassian occupation - including some of the cliff vines that had to

be hand planted because the birds who brought the seeds to the cliffs

initially were extinct. Oh, I was sore - but the cliffs are beautiful!"

Teldar's eyes clouded over, seeing his *j'fall'an's* enthusiasm over this alien world. "I see."

Jadzia put her arms around Teldar's waist. "Look, Teldar. I've never forgotten my duties to Trillian. I was Joined - and *j'fall'an*

to you - because I had a duty to my people. I'm not about to forget

it."

Teldar grinned impishly. "Just because it's a duty, doesn't mean it can't be a pleasurable one."

Jadzia laughed. "Of course."

Teldar tilted his head and brushed his lips against hers.

Hungrily, Jadzia returned the kiss, and it wasn't long before thoughts

of duty were lost from their minds.

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Path: netcom.com!ix.netcom.com!netnews

From: allronix@ix.netcom.com (Jessica Krucek)

Newsgroups: alt.startrek.creative

Subject: "Compatability Factor" (DS9, J/J, PG-13) 4/9

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Part 4

Second Place

"Even if I was first in my class...It wouldn't have changed

anything...Dax...It's true that I do have..feelings for her..."

- Julian Bashir to Altovar "Distant Voices"

The next day, Julian was trying to absorb himself in work, but only wound up performing his duties like he was on autopilot.

It was a slow day, and that made it even more infuriating. The

Andorians were doing all right, in fact, better than predicted. A Dabo

girl had sliced her hand on some cut glass. A Bajoran woman broke her

wrist in a fall. After that, there was nothing to do besides listen to

the whispers of memories and the hurricane of emotions.

He had taken to pacing the Infirmary, straightening out this,

resorting that. He even remembered enough of his Engineering courses to

fix some malfunctioning tricorders. That, at least, kept his mind from

spiralling off the deep end. It also kept him from trying to sort out

the mess of emotions that he really didn't want to have to deal with.

The door hissed open, and Julian looked up. A muttered curse escaped his lips.

Teldar Sobel had entered the Infirmary.

Taking a deep breath, holding it for the mental count of five,

and exhaling slowly, Julian tried and clear the insane (and completely

inappropriate) mix of emotions from his mind.

"Doctor Bashir? Are you in?" Teldar's voice echoed through the empty Infirmary.

Julian walked out from his office. "Doctor Sobel," he said, trying to remain professional. "How may I help you?"

Teldar said, "Well, you offered to help me with some of my research. Are you busy?"

Julian looked around the Infirmary. There was nothing left to clear up, no patients to attend to. Before he really knew what he was

saying, his answer came.

"No, I'm not. What is it that I can help you with?"

Teldar handed him a PADD. Julian looked over the results as

Teldar explained. "Just a follow-up study to one done two hundred years

ago on Trillian. It's just a comptability study on *j'fall'an* bonds.

How the couples are matched genetically."

"*J'fall'an* bonds. Like the one between you and Jadzia?"

"Pretty ironic, isn't it?" said Teldar with a laugh. "I happen to be studying something that I'm a part of. The Board put me to this

study. I hope I can come through for them."

"Genetic compatability..." Julian rolled the words off his tounge as he studied the results.

"That *is* the basis of the *'j'fall'an* bond," Teldar said with a smile as he walked over to the main terminal in the Infirmary's computer.

Julian was roiling in shock. Anything beneath his knees turned to

water. He turned around to see Teldar studying the panel layout on the

computer.

"Th...Then you and Jadzia...? I'm sorry. I didn't know."

Teldar looked up at Julian, puzzled. "Didn't know what?"

"That you and Jadzia were getting married on the basis of genetic

compatability."

Teldar laughed. "It's good that we got to know each other as

Initiates. Oh, she's different now, and so am I, but that's better than

some *j'fall'an.*"

Julian was still dumbfounded. "You and Jadzia...on the sole basis of genetics? Is that all you are marrying her for?"

Teldar frowned. "Of course not! The *j'fall'an* bond is an honored tradition among the Trill. You're human, so I'm not expecting

you to understand it totally. There are things I don't understand about

your society, but Trill is a society based on suitablity."

This brought back some very foul memories for Julian, of the only

time he had been on Teldar's homeworld, of his precious Board's

willingness to sacrifice Jadzia.

That night, Julian swore that if Jadzia died at the hands of the

Board, he'd gladly help Commander Sisko ruin their cherished "status

quo." He'd laugh as a whole planet sunk into chaos...

Julian exhaled. "Suitability."

Teldar was watching the computer, and thankfully, not Julian's face. Julian shook his head.

"Doctor Sobel, can I help you with that? The computer can be a bit tempermental at times."

"Thank you," said Teldar, gesturing to the interface. "I'm afraid

I've never worked with Cardassian technology."

Julian nodded coolly and punched up the main Infirmary computer.

"There, everything should be accessable now."

Teldar manipulated some of the panels. "I see now. It's pretty

amazing..."

"That it even works?"

"No, that the Federation can't at least install a better computer to this station. This thing must be ten years behind the times."

"The information is all accessable, and it works - that's all I want it to do, Doctor Sobel."

Teldar shook his head. "Have you always settled for second-rate?"

Reflectively, Julian's hands balled into fists, and sheer rage

coursed through him. The flash of anger passed as reason took

over.

Teldar didn't mean *that.*

Teldar was staring at him. "Doctor?"

Julian let out the breath he had been holding. "Sorry, just reminded me of something. Nothing really."

The calculations from Teldar's study flashed onto the viewer.

Statistics, varying generational studies. It all looked correct on

first glance. Even marriage statistics matched with the database on the

Trill homeworld.

The figures 200 years ago were matched up along side, an even more bewildering set of data.

The premise was simple, the data complex. Julian felt as though he was wandering in a maze of information.

"Well, it all looks there to me," said Julian. "What do you need me for?"

"I need to match these statistics with research done by off-worlders like yourself. I mean, the Trill data is all here, and I

can organize it myself, but getting access to certain types of

information from other planets can be daunting on Trill. I figured a

Starfleet database might have what I'm looking for."

Julian cleared his throat. "I see."

"Could you help me?" asked Teldar. "You have the access, and

organizing this will be easier if the three of us work together."

"Three?"

"Of course," said Teldar. "Dax volunteered to help."

Julian closed his eyes, and tried to ward off the impending

headache. He hadn't really wanted to work in close proximity to the

both of them.

He could hear Teldar mutter. "Second-rate..."

Julian's eyes flew open, and he had spoken before he could control his voice. "What in hell do you mean by that?!" he snapped.

Teldar gestured to the computer. "This computer's down again. Why

are you humans so tempermental?"

Julian pressed a few buttons to get the infirmary computer working again, then wordlessly got up and went to the replicator.

"Tarkalian tea - extra sweet."

A mug materialized in the slot. Julian took it and started to sip

it, willing himself to calm down. The shields - the facade of calmness-

snapped into place, but the damage was done.

*Second-rate...Who in hell does he think he is? And Jadzia is

marrying him?*

Julian shook his head to quiet that internal voice. Teldar hadn't

been referring to *him* - only the Infirmary computer.

Teldar looked up. "Why are you so angry?"

"It's...been a lousy couple of days, Doctor Sobel. It's beginning to get to me."

Teldar shook his head. "Whatever you say."

Now, Julian was furious. No, dammit. It was wrong to be angry.

Teldar brought up the files he needed and stored them in the

Infirmary main computer under a temporary subdirectory. "Well, I can go

over these tomorrow. I'll see you tonight."

"Tonight? Where?"

"The engagement party, of course."

Engagement party? Dimly, Julian remembered that Jadzia had invited him to it. He really didn't want to go, but...

"Ah, yes," Julian said. "Where is it being held?"

"My quarters - wear your dress uniform."

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Part 5

Prior Engagements

"You can act like a monarch or a pillar of the bourgeoisie...but

I've got a point of view. How about a little sympathy?!"

- Human League "Don't You Know I Want You?"

The engagement party was held in Teldar Sobel's guest quarters.

It was a fairly small gathering. Jadzia's friends, some members of the

science department, a few of Teldar's assistants, and a

Guardian-Priestess Teldar had brought all the way from Trill to honor

the *j'fall'an* bond.

Feeling incredibly cheerful, Captain Ben Sisko had decided to try

out all his favorite recepies. Grinning ear-to-ear, he was introducing

some of the Trill to crawfish, while Jadzia looked on in amusement,

holding on to Teldar's arm.

Julian was trying his best to ignore Jadzia, chatting pleasantly

with a pretty technician. She was new to the station, Bajoran, and very

shy. Julian smiled as she talked about her family on Bajor. She was

very attractive, Julian supposed. However, she was very attached to a

young man on Bajor. Too bad, she might have been a good companion for

the evening. As it was, she was assuging his loneliness, and that was

enough.

Funny, but Julian realized that he hadn't had female

companionship in quite some time. His last fling had happened only a

short time after he turned thirty. She was Bajoran, crew on a trading

ship. It was another mutually pleasurable (and strictly physical)

affair.

A bitter taste filled his mouth. One-night stands satisfied him

less. He chalked it up to getting himself settled, to maturing.

Julian looked up and saw Jadzia. He felt like he had swallowed a

stone. What the hell was wrong with him?

And Teldar Sobel...Looking at him filled Julian with scorn. His damn Board...they still infuriated him, their willingness to

sacrifice

Jadzia to cover *their* arrogant mistake. What if Teldar Sobel knew

about Joran Dax? Oh, it would hurt him, maybe shatter a few illusions

he had about his world.

But it would hurt Jadzia, too. Julian realized that he didn't really have it in him to go up and ruin her joy.

And what if someone had run up to *him,* saying something about

Palis's past? He'd dismiss it as a jealous lie. After all, Palis's

father knew what he was doing when he introduced his lively ballerina

daughter to a inexperienced 18-year-old Julian, didn't he?

He listened as Jadzia described the ceremony. It was to be presided over by the Guardian-priestess (who was Teldar's aunt) and Ben

Sisko, taking on the roles of Kele and Tosa in a recreation of the

first *j'fall'an* match, made by the Gods.

Julian felt his gut twist. He rested his head in his hands and

willed the sensation to go away.

Nerys was to be Jadzia's *Jem'far* - symbolic of the lesser,

Unjoined Gods, helping to prepare the temple (Nerys had already agreed

to help convert the Bajoran temple, saying the Prophets always liked a

wedding). Teldar's *Jem'far* was a small, quiet man, a clerk for the

lab where Teldar worked.

And the last position, designed to be a surprise, was the

kelan, the praisers, the ones who gave the bride and groom over to

the Joined Gods. Their duty was to tell the Joined Gods why the

couple

was worthy of such honor. In the legend, they were the little brother

of the bride and the servant of the groom, and tradition maintained

that they both were to be Unjoined. Teldar's *kelan* was a lab

assistant.

*Jadzia's going to pick someone like Miles, or one of her lab

technicians.*

An icy hand fell on his shoulder. Julian looked up, into sapphire

blue eyes.

"Julian, will you speak as my *kelan?*"

In an instant, Julian realized that all eyes were on him, expecting his answer. He could refuse. That was perfectly within his

rights.

A brief moment of frustration as he realized his weakness in this

matter. *I can never tell you "no," can I, Jadzia?*

"Yes," he said, concentrating on not stuttering. "I'd be

honored."

The room applauded. Ben spoke up. "The wedding is underway! In a

week, I'll be seeing the both of them off to Trill for an extended

leave of absence, and Jadzia has three months of leave time."

"Enough to get things started." Teldar said, pulling her away.

Julian bolted out of his seat, wanting to follow Teldar and grab her away from him. Oh, damn! That wasn't the right way to be thinking.

She was happy with Teldar. He was like her, a Trill, Joined,

enjoying

the social position that came with it. Jadzia could understand Teldar

Sobel (and enjoy his company) much more than she could ever enjoy or

understand a human!

They had turned around and were looking at him. "What is it,

Julian?" Jadzia asked.

He had to say something, but what? His tongue felt a meter

thick.

"I just want to say...Congratulations...to both of you."

Jadzia flashed that Mona Lisa smile at him, and Julian felt even

more uncomfortable. "Thank you, Julian."

He extended his hand to Teldar. "Jadzia is very beautiful, and a very close friend of mine. I can't think of a luckier man."

Teldar frowned. Jadzia pulled Teldar's hand to Julian's. Julian

grasped it and started to shake.

"Human custom," whispered Jadzia.

Teldar still scowled. "I see."

Swiftly letting go of Julian's hand, Teldar wiped it on his pantleg. Julian and Jadzia frowned a little. Julian wiped his hand on

the front of his dress uniform, laughing weakly. "Sorry. Nerves."

"Why don't the two of you talk while I get some catfish?" Jadzia

said, slipping over to the buffet table.

"So," said Teldar. "Is she always this casual?"

"Jadzia?" Julian asked. "Well, yes, I suppose. Not that she can't be serious if the situation warrants, or if something is bothering her,

but normally she's pretty lighthearted."

Teldar crossed his arms. "How well do you know Jadzia?"

"We're good friends, that's all," Julian said defensively.

Teldar matched Julian's defensiveness. "That wasn't what I asked.

What has she been teaching you?"

"Teaching me? I'm afraid I don't follow."

Teldar sighed. "I guess not."

Julian's blood was boiling now. "What is that supposed to mean?

She is my friend, nothing more, nothing less."

Still infuriatingly calm, "Do you think she sees you as an equal?

If that's the case then you are quite mistaken. You seem to be Jadzia's

age outwardly, and that's probably given you all the wrong ideas."

"What *wrong* ideas?" Julian's voice was a low growl.

Teldar shook his head. "A Joined, like Jadzia Dax, is far more

than you can comprehend. I'm not saying that it's your fault for not

having the scope to see her for what she really is. First of all, you

aren't a Trill. You haven't been trained to honor Parents of Society.

Secondly - you aren't like Jadzia or me. You have your one life, your

one outlook. That is neither good nor bad, merely limited..."

Julian was livid, but trying to keep a facade of control.

"Limited?"

"You are restricted by your outlook, by having only one chance at

life. You also were not trained in our ways - in emotional control, of

the responsibilities and honor of being a Parent of Society, in

trancendence of lesser passions..."

"Lesser passions." The words were acid on Julian's tongue.

"Like

Reassociations, or even marrying outside your caste. You would have to

renounce everything for it."

"Yes, who's been telling you this?"

"Jadzia has. She tells me things about Trillian."

Jadzia had crept up near the two men, who didn't seem to notice

anyone else in the room. Teldar seemed to be calm, but Jadzia

recognized Julian's annoyance. One look into the hardening dark eyes

told her that Julian was holding himself back from assaulting Teldar

verbally.

"Sorry, Teldar," said Julian. "I'm not following you."

Now Teldar was furious. "You'll call me Doctor Sobel - or Sobel if you can't manage that."

"Excuse me, gentlemen," Jadzia interrupted. "I brought you some

water."

Julian took the cool glass and smiled sweetly at her. "Thank you,

Jadzia."

Jadzia took Teldar's arm. "Remember tomorrow. I want to see if you can focus with your eyes open this time."

"I'll be there," Julian said, feeling incredibly uncomfortable.

To clarify for Teldar, Jadzia explained, "I'm teaching him

gon'mal techniques. He's a pretty good student."

Teldar glowered at Julian. "It's a pity you haven't mastered the

part about emotional control."

Jadzia smiled diplomatically. "Excuse us."

She started to pull Teldar away from the center of the party.

Julian took a glass of ice water and sat on a bench in the opposite

corner of the room, watching as Teldar and Jadzia talked.

It still felt too hot in here, and far too uncomfortable, but a part of Julian knew that the discomfort was more personal than due to

the hot dress uniform.

As he drank, a yellow-shirted man stepped out of the crowd and sat down next to him.

"This spot available, or are you going to spend the entire night

brooding in private?"

"Might as well sit down, Chief," said Julian. "I'm not going

anywhere."

The Irishman took a place next to Julian, and gestured to Teldar.

"He was very rude to you, Julian. I'd have given him a piece of my

mind."

"It's not worth it. I've found that much out. It would disrupt

things too much."

"Still, look at that condensing attitude." Miles's voice twisted into an imitation of Teldar's. "'You'll call me Doctor Sobel -

or Sobel if you can't manage that.' I'd be more than tempted to pop him

one."

"But if I disrupted the party, it would hurt Jadzia more than it

would hurt me, and I don't want that."

For a long time, Julian sipped his water and gazed out at the leoine woman in the blue and black dress uniform, deep in thought. How

beautiful she was! Julian had been able to ignore it for years, but now

it was impossible to block out of his mind. He gripped the glass

tightly, unaware that Miles was watching his reactions keenly.

"Julian, what's the matter? You keep staring at Dax - why?

"Miles," he said seriously. "Do you promise not to repeat this?"

Miles slumped next to Julian on the bench. "Of course, Julian. What is it?"

Julian groaned, and buried his head in his hands. His voice was

barely above a whisper.

"I'm in love with her, Chief. I don't want to be, but I am."

Miles shook his head. "In love? Julian..."

"Forget it. Forget I said *anything.*"

"I'm not going to. Now, what's going on? Are she and you...?"

Julian looked up. "No. She doesn't even know that I love her, and

it's been hell trying to hide it from her."

"Hiding it? Why? You've always been pretty forward with how you feel about people."

"Chief, she does *not* feel that way about me. She's made that quite clear. I kept silent out of respect for her, and tried convince

myself that what I felt for her was not what I had thought," he

chortled bleakly. "At one point, I was telling myself that she was like

a big sister to me. Even told that blasted Leythian that she was only a

friend..."

"It isn't that way?"

Julian shook his head. "More times than I'd like to admit,

I've

caught myself thinking things about her that are not just
unbrotherly,

but indecent."

Miles appraised his friend for a moment in silence, watching
the

stooped shoulders, the defeated posture, the sheer anguish in
Julian's

dark eyes.

"You've got it bad for her, don't you?"

Julian nodded wordlessly, sipping the water from the glass in
his

hand.

"It's God's ultimate joke, isn't it?" Julian said, his gaze

focused on Teldar and Jadzia, pulling Teldar off to a corner to
speak

to him, away from the gathering. "I've loved her from the day I
lay

eyes on her, and she was already set to be married to Teldar. Damn
it,

I WISH she would have told me why she was brushing me off. I just
wish

I could go over there and *tell* her how I feel."

"Not such a great idea with Sobel. With him and his 'Parent
of

Society' bit..."

"Chief, that *is* the proper role of a Joined Trill. By
Trill

standards, Jadzia is a rebel. Seeing us as equals rather than
children

is an unusual attitude for a Joined Trill to adopt."

"I still don't like his arrogance," said Miles. "That's why I
hang around you - you've lost your arrogance."

"More like I've un-learned it. I don't need it to survive here,
like I did on Earth."

"What do you mean?"

Julian smiled weakly. "Well, Chief, Starfleet Medical is tougher

than it looked. You had to be a bit arrogant to push ahead..."

But that wasn't the real reason. He couldn't be vulnerable, not with a father who hated his son for not choosing diplomacy, law,

politics - the games where your right hand was shaking your opponent's,

and your left was concealing a dagger. Games where you turned any true

emotion your opponent showed and twisted it to break them, hiding your

villianry behind a genial smile. Being a honored presence in

public...berating and beating your son in private for minor mistakes

because he showed vulnerabilities you could twist.

It had taken a lifetime for Julian to build the arrogance that

Michael wanted to see, and it took so much work to maintain, but it

kept everyone away - far enough so they couldn't hurt him. It was a

slow process before Julian realized that he was safe here, that he

didn't have to hide from an angry father, or from competing classmates.

The energy Julian spent on a facade could be better spent on treating

patients, and putting the past behind him by building a new life near

Bajor.

He could be honest with people now, and he did have a lot more

energy.

Still, he didn't trust them enough to let them know about his

"past life" - he had given them enough information to please their

curiosity, but not enough to give him away. The only things he had left

of his past were the trinkets on the shelf, and his medical school

diaries.

Palis had never seen his diaries. She never really had an idea about Michael, either. While Julian had loved her, he didn't trust

Palis with something that private or painful.

Julian looked up at Jadzia and Teldar chatting in the corner.

I wonder if Jadzia even read my diaries...

"Now, what?" Teldar asked, seeing the displeasure on Jadzia's face. "I was correcting him."

"What you did to him was rude."

"I was asserting my authority, Jadzia! That doctor doesn't have the scope..."

"Julian doesn't understand our role, no. That's because he's human. Humans are not like us. They don't understand what our role is.

They don't have the language to fully understand us. I've come to

respect that."

"He relates to you as an equal. I can understand why you and Captain Sisko can treat each other as equals - Sisko has earned his

rights by authority of his rank, and his education from your previous

Host, but Bashir..."

"He finds his own way. Even to other humans, he's a bit of an

oddity. He sees the world differently, finds his answers in places most

humans wouldn't. I've come to respect that. In a way, it's pretty

admirable."

"I can see the admiration..." said Teldar, sulking.

"Teldar, he's earned my respect. We've seen each other through a

lot...our relationship *is* platonic. He is a trusted friend, and a

good man. Don't try to see what isn't there."

Teldar looked up. "Then why does he address you by your

Host-name? Most people call you Dax. You know what we were taught. That

name, that part, is an obsolete part of ourselves, something we

transcended when we were Joined. Only those with tight kin-bonds,

j'fall'an, or trainers should use that form of address commonly."

"I've explained, and he sometimes does address me as Dax. It just

goes back to his way of seeing things. He's told me enough times that

he sees me as Jadzia first, and as Dax second. That may be the opposite

way of how most people perceive me, but like the rest of Julian's way

of seeing, I've come to accept it as part of him that I'm not going to

try and change."

Teldar shook his head in disgust. "A person like that would never

fit in on Trillian. Even Unjoined, he'd be a problem."

"Then just be glad he's human, and not Trill." said Jadzia.

Teldar smiled shallowly. "Jadzia, you really need to be your

young friend to Trill - maybe then he could at least learn about what

we are."

"He's already been there," said Jadzia distantly, her thoughts

suddenly becoming unfocused.

Teldar was oblivious, continuing to glower at Julian. "That human

has no place to critsize us. There are reasons for a Joined not being

allowed to marry outside their caste. Humans are so short-sighted,

emotional, uncontrolled. They didn't have Parents to guide them - I

pity them."

"I think they're doing all right," said Jadzia. "Teldar, I'm going back to my quarters to sleep. I'm tired."

That night, Jadzia couldn't sleep. Memories tumbled around her minds as she tossed and turned in bed.

** "And always honor the Parents of Society. Their eyes are opened on many generations, many experiences. Your sight is bound by

only one set of experiences to draw from."

Jadzia knelt next to Teldar, holding hands while the

Guardian-Priest read from the Book of Legends. Their hands rested on

her thigh.

Saying the Oath that all Unjoined people took at the end of

Worship, Jadzia looked up from the thick crowd of Initiates and said

with them, a great voice formed of all the present worshippers.

"Kele and Tosa have seen fit to rule our world and bring it back

from chaos. Their Heirs are the Joined Monarchs and those who will be

Joined. They will bring us into the light we are becoming. Into the

Light, guided by those who are whole."

"The Truth is the First Light, Loyalty is the Second, Reverence

where due is the Third. Hold to the Lights..."

After the short prayer, Teldar looked up at Jadzia.

"J'fall'an...rebuilders. And to be Joined. You and I, a whole life

together, growing with each other."

She smiled. "Like the Legends..."

He laughed and squeezed her hand. "Yes, like the Legends..."**

The memory changed, with still no peace. Why did she have to believe all of it? And why did the challenge to those beliefs have to

be so horrible. Why did she almost die, almost go crazy - before she

realize the truth?

**"The Legends never told me about *this!*" she yelled in

frustration, pacing as her two human friends stood by, helpless and

unable to *understand* the magnitude of her problem.

"You have to have this to save your life, Dax!" said Ben.

"Without it, you won't be able to stay stable. Symbiont and Host will

reject each other."

Jadzia sunk onto a couch. "But a whole *life,* Benjamin. A whole

person I was never aware of..." She pinched her nose and tried to draw

on emotional control that was no good any more. "Damn it, why? Why me?"

Julian could only look on, frustrated, no doubt, that his own

medical skill wasn't up to the task. "Gods, Dax," he whispered. "I'm

sorry. I wish I could help you, but I'm afraid that what you're going

through is far beyond my understanding." He shook his head. "I really

wish I could give you some good advice, or do something."

Jadzia looked down, and picked up the PADD again. The old file had been triple-encoded, and stored so deep in the Trill Symbiosis

Commission database that it would have taken a Bynar a decade to crack

it. They finally brought it up for her to look at.

She brushed her fingers over the picture. A stranger, yet, he was

alive in her, causing disruptions and nightmares so he could speak to

her.

And time was running out - either she live with him, with the awful things he represented, or they both died.

Not looking up, her voice hollow and distant, she spoke. "You know, when I was an Initiate, I was taught that only the ones who were

picked the Gods and honed through training were Joined. No bad people

were Joined. Joran Balar murdered a doctor, and was emotionally

unstable."

She brushed her fingers over the PADD, and continued bitterly.

"And I was taught that the Board was the highest truth of the Trill

civilization, they and the Monarchs being only a step down from Kele

and Tosa themselves. To know that they did this...to know that they

aren't...a whole truth that I was taught is gone. A truth I believed

for seven lifetimes."

"Jadzia," said Julian. "Sisko and I are here. Being human, we might not be much help in understanding this, but..."

She looked up and smiled. "Julian, I'm not sure of a lot of my

beliefs, of anything, right now. Except one thing."

"Which is?"

Jadzia murmured, transfixed by the stranger on the portrait,
the

stranger in her. "That Joran and I belong together. Deep down, I
think

he's always been there." **

Had she ever questioned the Board until she had discovered
Joran?

No, even "wild man" Curzon respected their truth as absolute. He
had

tried to teach some his ways to a equally untamable aide named
Benjamin

Sisko...Well, Ben certainly tamed himself (actually, Jennifer and
Jake

had a large hand in it).

She sighed. She hadn't been the same since. She had
wantonly

explored her new passion by running into the arms of Deral,
the

ultimate "impossible lover" - wanting more than anything to escape
her

responsibility to Trill society to be with him.

Looking back on it, Jadzia realized that what she felt for Deral
was childish infatuation, rebellion from all she had been trained
to

be.

And the next step, Lenaria Kaan, the former Nilani Kaan,

j'fall'an to Torias Dax. She had lost herself in the memories, let
a

past she wasn't part of rule her. It was frustrating at times, to
be

ruled by passions and a mind that really wasn't your own, but
someone

else's. At times, she felt as if she had no control, no place
for

herself. She would always be overruled by voices from the past, and
she

constantly struggled to keep those damned voices silent.

Why was she willing to be exiled? Did she *want* to die without

fufilling her duty to the next generation of Parents?

No answers. No answers at all. The answers she always accepted no

longer were true.

From netcom.com!ix.netcom.com!netnews Tue Nov 28 16:11:05 1995

Xref: netcom.com alt.startrek.creative:31721

Path: netcom.com!ix.netcom.com!netnews

From: allronix@ix.netcom.com (Jessica Krucek)

Newsgroups: alt.startrek.creative

Subject: "Compatability Factor" (DS9, J/J, PG-13) 6/9

Date: 28 Nov 1995 06:06:50 GMT

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Part 6

The Truth comes out

"I've got one thing to say to you. I guess you just don't realize

(that) when you see me look at you - there's more than friendship in my

eyes."

Human League "Don't You know I Want You?"

The next day, Teldar and Jadzia worked on a console, while Julian

kept his distance.

Sorting Teldar's data was a daunting task. The old Trill

programming code that held the centuries-old statistics would have been

convertable had this been anything other than a battered

Cardassian-Federation patchwork. The computer went down twice while

trying to load the data into an organized pattern.

On the third try, everything sorted itself. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

Julian frowned as he looked at the equations. "Wait a minute.

This doesn't look right."

"Why doesn't it?" asked Jadzia.

"Look at this." Julian pointed to the screen. "Look here. This is

the gene for Bataff syndrome, the most common of all genetic defects on

Trill. Look at the genetic scans done on the *j'fall'an* pairs, and

look at the rate for the general population." Julian punched up another

file. "According to Doctor T'Selea, who conducted the general genetic

research on the Trill homeworld, twenty years ago the rate of this gene

in the *j'fall'an* pairs is only five percent lower. For most genetic

diseases, the rate is about ten percent lower"

"There. That backs up the research the Board conducted. Two

centuries ago, the rate for Bataff Syndrome showing up on a genetic

scan was twelve percent."

"Hold on," said Julian. "Those are just statistics. They can't be

the whole story."

"Statistics don't lie, especially not these. They back up my thesis completely."

"Not really," said Jadzia. "Remember that people with

Bataff

Syndrome don't have the Board's blessing to get married."

"You mean they *can't* be married?" Julian was dumbfounded.

Teldar glowered at Julian. "Of course they can't - their children

wouldn't be considered for accelerated schools."

Jadzia stared at the diagram. "And having Bataff Syndrome as a

recessive trait disqualifies you from the Host Program."

Julian shook his head. "Pity. Bataff Syndrome doesn't affect

intelligence, or any other mental ability. It's only an enzyme

deficiency, very correctable. Too bad they don't have the same

opportunity for higher education."

Teldar shook his head. "Humans...complete paradox."

"What is *that* supposed to mean?"

Teldar shook his head. "I mean that your history has been full of

hierarchy. Your Parents of Society were first priests, then monarchs,

appointed by your God. After that, corporations..."

Julian cut him off, keeping very quiet, but seething. "They ruled us because we let them. They took advantage from everyone in order to

better themselves. They were corrupted, greedy, and unhealthy. Humans

finally came to realize that they were slaves to those with economic

power and revolted against it."

"And now you are an egalitarian society. Chaotic. Little wonder you had to ally yourselves with the Vulcans. You wouldn't have survived

if you hadn't."

Both Julian and Jadzia were appalled. Julian was trying to calm

down, but was far too shocked to answer Teldar's insult.

Julian just spun his chair around and started to punch up some more databases.

Jadzia pulled Teldar off to the side. "You apologize this *instant* for what you just said to Julian!"

"Why should I? He is completely uncontrolled, oblivious to even the basic logic of our culture. Why are you friends with him? He

addresses you by your Host-name, mocks the Board, insults our

homeworld."

"He finds the Trill way just as appalling as you find his way. As for why I am friends with him, I like his company. If you weren't so

bigoted and condensending..."

"Bigoted? Your precious Julian is the one who is limited," said

Teldar calmly. "And you are a poor excuse for a Joined, Jadzia Dax.

You've been away from the Homeworld for the better part of two

lifetimes. I think you need to go back and relearn a few basics as to

how to relate to people like *him.*" He pointed to Julian. "He is your

student, not a friend. If the two of you are having some sort of an

affair -"

Now Jadzia was furious. Before she could answer him, Julian's voice cut through the air. "Look at these. The marriage statistics.

This would explain the drop in genetic diseases."

The Trills walked over to the human's computer. On it was a

cross-section of marriages sanctioned by the Board on the basis of the

mandatory genetic scans. "According to this social register, the Board

stopped sanctioning marriages of some people with not only dominant

genetic diseases, but combinations of recessive genes. Crossing this

with Doctor Sobel's findings..."

"But I had a cross section!" said Teldar. "I had marriage

statistics."

"For two provinces, which should have been sufficient, but since

those are the political and economic centers on the planet, there are a

higher percentage of Joined citizenry, and people who are genetically

healthier than the planetary average. The numbers are tilted a bit. The

raw data proves Teldar's point, but stacked up against social

conditions, the numbers don't quite match."

"What would *you* know about the social conditions on Trill?"

"It's all here, and it's not lying. check any database you want.

Socio-economic status, political affiliation, marital status, disease

rate among the general population...I think that the numbers for your

two provinces are slightly tilted. I'm curious. Check the genetic

statistics in the *j'fall'an* population against the general marriage

register for all of Trillian, and not just these two provinces."

Teldar started to work the computer. "Why? That will crash the

computer again."

"He's got me curious now," Jadzia said, punching up the

necessary

data.

"This isn't necessary..." said Teldar.

"Oh, Julian. You were right. Look at this!"

Both men rushed over to Jadzia's terminal. "Doctor T'Selea didn't

test a wide sample of the general population, or non-*J'fall'an*

Joineds. That kind of permission wasn't given by the Trill leadership

until about six years ago. Now that the information for planet-wide is

available..."

Julian shook his head. "The sample must have been biased. Look at

the database now. Looks like the rate of genetic defects in Trills

doesn't vary too much."

"But what about other things? Intellect, capabilities, talents,"

said Teldar. "Those are other things in the genetic code that won't be

as visible."

"True." said Julian, "But since any educational access is

determined by the Symbiosis Board, more study on a control group of

Trill children picked at random, versus the stratified educational

system in place right now, would have to be done to see if a child whose

genes keep him out of the Host program can still succeed in an

accelerated school -"

Unknown to Julian, both Trills were going pale. "As in,

integration of classrooms?" Jadzia said. "Having a child who is

disqualified by genetic tests study with Initiates?"

Sensing their discomfort, Julian turned around. "Sorry. It's just my human, egalitarian prejudice getting in the way again."

Teldar reached over and turned off the computer. "The statistics I collected stand. These findings, fascinating as they are, don't prove anything."

"They prove that more research is needed," said Julian. "For example the test scores database. It's true that the children of

Joined, *j'fall'an* parents score much higher on tests than children of

other groups, but that could be due to the fact that the parents are

highly educated themselves, and the child is brought up with a deeper

commitment to the program. Social conditions need to be factored in.

Therefore, this study is inconclusive."

Teldar nodded coolly. "It's conclusive enough. Thank you, Doctor

Bashir."

Turning abruptly, Teldar left the lab.

Julian slumped in his seat. "Jadzia, can I ask *why* you want to

marry him? I never thought I'd say this, but I've a lot more respect

for Quark."

"Julian, you can't possibly understand this, but -"

"I can't understand?" The fury Julian had bottled up against

Teldar Sobel finally spilled over. "Why? Because I only have one life?

Because I haven't lived the centuries you have?"

"Teldar and I were promised to each other *before* either of us were Joined. We were barely older than children...We..." her voice was

quiet. "Julian, can I trust you with this? This does not leave the

room."

Julian put his hand over hers and nodded. "I promise. It will be our secret."

She blushed a little. "We were doing some late-night studying

together - You know, it's expected that you get to know your

j'fall'an before the two of you are Joined and well...Teldar and I

spent a lot of time together, some of it pretty *intimate* - if you get

the picture."

"He was your first?" Julian asked, feeling a bit awkward.

"You

actually fell in love with him?"

She nodded, her "freckles" standing out against the blush. "We

just were expected to be married when the time was right...When I

hadn't heard from him in so long, I just thought that he dropped out of

the Program. I just thought the *j'fall'an* dictate was broken, and I'd

never see him again."

Julian nodded. "I understand. You still love him. I understand a

little. If..." Thinking of Palis, he sighed. "If my first love came to

take me back, I...Oh, I don't know...I'd have a hard time refusing

her."

"There is no way you can fully understand what I was like before I was Joined, or why I have to honor this."

Julian caught the frown that came to his face. "I can understand a little," he said. "Before I came here, when I was a cadet, it was

like training for becoming someone different - the man I am today."

"But you weren't *j'fall'an* - you weren't promised to another

person. There's a part of me that wants this - that still loves

Teldar."

Julian frowned and turned back to the computer, punching up tables of minutia. *Perhaps this one-lifed fool does understand. There

are reasons that I let everyone assume the details of my life before

the station, and never bother to correct these assumptions, even when

they contradict each other. They know more about your past life than

they do mine - and there are reasons, Dax. Gods know there *are*

reasons...*

Still, he could understand why Jadzia would want Teldar, and not a failure like him, someone who had failed the first love of his

life...

And was going to lose the second one.

"Julian?" she was worried. She walked silently up to the back of his chair. "Julian, what is going on?"

His back still turned to her, eyes still locked on the viewer, he

spoke. "Nothing really. I'm very happy for you and Teldar...very

happy...Please, leave me alone."

"Julian, don't lie to me...What is wrong?"

"Please, leave me alone. I just need time to think."

"Julian, I need to know why you're upset."

Julian logged off the computer and turned slowly. His unwavering

stare met her. His voice was quiet, barely above a whisper, but it

burned with bitterness.

"For all of Teldar's and your boasting about how the Joined are so much brighter than short-sighted, childlike creatures like

myself...Eight lifetimes, and you can't spot what's in front of your

nose."

He sighed. "I forgot. You train all of those unnecessary emotions

out of yourself before you're Initiated."

Julian reflectively tensed at the anger in her voice.

"Jealousy.

You're jealous of Teldar? Joined Gods! Julian, you are a child."

He turned around, his eyes now like blazing coals. His voice was

still quiet. "For what? Acknowledging that I'm still in love you?" He

rose out of his chair, not taking his eyes off her.

"Why did you never say **anything** about this before?"

"I stopped saying anything remotely beyond 'Yes, teach me, oh

Wise One' - because I knew that you would blow me off like some

infatuated schoolboy. You wouldn't have believed me. Hell, I don't

think you believe me now."

"Julian..." She was angry now. "You had better not do

anything..."

Suddenly defeated, he looked to the floor. "No, and I'd be a child if I did. Believe me when I say this, but what you want is far

more important than anything I could wish for, and I know that you

don't share those feelings for me. Which is why what I said **also**

does

not leave this room." Beaten, he sunk back into his chair. "I will be

silent for you and Teldar Sobel, and I will not say anything about this

conversation to anyone - *because* I love you."

Jadzia could read his body language - defeated, cowed. For some

reason, she just wanted to run to him, to reassure him that he would

get over this, that love, like everything else, was transient, just

hormones and chemical reactions - that in the long run, it didn't

matter - no one person or two people mattered.

But something caught in her throat, and her emotional control was

already weakened. Somehow, he had always managed to undo in minutes

what Candidate and Initiate training took years to train in.

Damn you, Julian...Don't do this to me...

She turned on her heel and left with only the woosh of the door to let him know she left.

From netcom.com!ix.netcom.com!netnews Tue Nov 28 16:11:12 1995

Xref: netcom.com alt.startrek.creative:31722

Path: netcom.com!ix.netcom.com!netnews

From: allronix@ix.netcom.com (Jessica Krucek)

Newsgroups: alt.startrek.creative

Subject: "Compatability Factor" (DS9, J/J, PG-13) 7/9

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Part 7

Admissions and Questions

"I come to you, defenses down, with the trust of a child"

- Peter Gabriel "Red Rain

Her feet took her to Teldar's quarters. He was on the floor,

meditating silently. She sat on the floor next to him. He opened his

eyes and glanced over her.

"You're upset. What's wrong?"

"Nothing much. I've just had a lot of thinking to do..."

Teldar's expression was blank.

"About the Bonding. Don't worry, *j'fall'an,* I'm prepared to follow through."

"That's good to hear. After all, it is the will of the Joined Gods that we marry and have children. Not all Joineds are this lucky."

She sat next to him and tried to meditate, but her mind was too

distracted. All her mind could focus on were memories. Of things she

should have noticed, should have seen...

Julian had to have been lying. He didn't feel *that way* for her,

did he? That couldn't be the case. After all, he didn't say anything

when she announced her intention to stay with Deral on the Meridian

World. When she was ready to throw caution to the wind for a previous

Host's wife, he was glad to help "chaperone" without a complaint -

without a word...

But it was staring her right in the face. His sudden silence, his

withdrawl from everyone and everything since Teldar arrived. The sheer

defeat and grief in his eyes and body. It was as if he had lost someone

dear to him...

And her own feelings? Had she *ever* asked herself what they

were?

She never had. Julian was too young...even if she did love him, it would be unethical, wrong.

And her marriages in previous lives - they were all to those of her caste. She had never loved someone so young before. Affairs,

yes...it was just hormones, just a biological drive to satisfy. Love

was not important. It was the shared experiences that bound two people,

a shared vision, whether to the rebuilding of Trillian, or to building

a family...

She was so confused. She opened her eyes to see Teldar. She shook

him out of the trance.

"Teldar," she said. "Teldar, there's something I have to know."

"What?" he said, looking annoyed at her.

"Teldar, do you want to love me? Do you really *want* to be

j'fall'an to me? Is this marriage something you want, or is it just

another duty? Another obligation?"

Teldar gripped her hand. "Jadzia...I love you because it is my duty to do so. Just as it is my duty to be a Parent of Society. It's

our obligation to love each other."

"That's not what I asked, Teldar. If we weren't *j'fall'an...*"

she swallowed hard. "If it wasn't my *duty* to be your wife, would you

still care about me? Even if...even if only as a friend?"

Teldar was gritting his teeth. "What the hell does it matter,

Jadzia?"

"It matters to me, Teldar. Please."

"It's our duty - nothing more. Look, Dax's past Hosts knew their

duties. Did they all question it like you do?"

She stood up. Her voice was raised, and Jadzia was aware that she

was abandoning all emotional control. "No, Teldar. None of my previous

Hosts questioned it because they never had reason to...."

"You are letting these Bajorans and humans interfere with your

training! Especially that damnable Bashir!" Teldar bolted up and glared

down on her. "You are supposed to be better than that! Is that what you

did with all the things you learned as an Initiate? Ignore them?

Question them like those radicals on Trillian?"

"Not ignore them, Teldar, but I have learned to question them. I

don't accept them as blindly as I used to."

"Question? Question the Board's wisdom? The wisdom that our people have followed for millennia? When you called yourself a 'loose

cannon' - you meant it. Get out of my sight!"

"Teldar?"

"GET OUT, JADZIA!!! And stay out until you have come to your

senses!"

With unsteady feet, Jadzia walked out of Teldar's quarters, and

into an uncertainty she had never felt in all her lives.

She walked down the corridor, avoiding the stares of people.

Blinking her stinging eyes, two hot tears rolled down her cheeks and

caught beneath her chin. Coming to her quarters, she disappeared

inside.

She lay on her bed, her mind reeling. Memories jumbling together,

Joran struggling against the straps binding him to the gurney,

screaming in agony as the Board doctor cut into him. Looking over and

seeing the unconscious man that later memories identified as Curzon.

The sharp pain of the knife. The struggling, the complete terror as the cord was cut, and Dax's world faded into blackness, only to

remember nothing of the painful murder, the desperate fight for life

that failed.

To remember nothing until decades, lifetimes later.

And the same horror repeated. First, with a man driven insane

with his bitterness. It was only after recieving his memories, his

mind, that she could understand Verad, understand the not-so-subtle

discrimination and segregation practiced by people like her, onto

people like Verad...people like her own family.

Secondly, with the Symbiosis Board. Teldar's damn Board, the

people who murdered Joran, and were prepared to kill her for the crime

of remembering. Joran had killed one of them - one of the infernal

Board doctors - in self defense, but the bastard was probably

just

re-Joined, allowed to live with what he had done...

The tears poured down, and Jadzia didn't try to stop them, and it

echoed so cruelly in her ears. The promises she had made before the

accursed Board as a naive Initiate, of how it was her duty to respect

the Joined Gods, the good Monarchs, and their extention, the

Board...How no wisdom was higher than that of the Board. How the Joined

were only a step below Kele and Tosa themselves...

How stupid she had been then! How trusting! And she had remained

trusting. Seven damn lifetimes. Even Curzon trusted the Board's

Wisdom...

*Curzon bent the rules all to hell, found all the loopholes, but

when it came down to it, he still trusted the Board...the Board's

logic. He knew he was nothing but a link in a bigger chain. So what

makes Jadzia Dax so special that she thinks she can break the chain?

What arrogance makes me think I'm any better than them? I'm even *LESS*

deserving...*

She lay on the bed, immobile. The doorchime sounded. Once, twice...A voice.

"Jadzia? Jadzia, answer me! Jadzia?"

She didn't want to move, and when she opened her mouth, all that

came out was a shameful sob.

Soon, she heard a panicked voice uttering an emergency medical

override, and the door sliding open.

"Jadzia! Gods, let her be all right..."

She finally managed to find her voice. "Julian, I'm here. In the

bedroom."

He bolted in as she was sitting up. He rushed over to her and

steadied her in his arms. "Jadzia, are you all right? Are you hurt?

What's wrong?"

"It's nothing you can fix, Julian. Please, just leave me

alone..."

"I'm not going to. Jadzia, something is wrong, and I'm your friend. Please tell me."

She brushed away some of the tears with her uniform sleeve, and

stared into his eyes. Those large, brown eyes. So trusting, so

concerned...

So beautiful.

"I came here...to tell you that I'm not going to look into the

social conditions any further, nor am I going to say anything about my

suspensions. It's Doctor Sobel's paper...and I have no business calling

all of your society into question. If he wants to overlook the social

conditions, I won't stop him. I'm sorry for being such a lout in front

of you both. It will be hard, but I give my blessing to the two of

you."

"Julian," Jadzia whispered. "Teldar doesn't..."

"He's called off the wedding?"

She shook her head. "No. We're still going to go through with it.

It's a duty...a duty I have to fulfill."

"You don't love him?" Julian asked. "I thought for certain..."

"It's not a matter of love. It's duty - my duty - to marry him."

she turned away from Julian, not wanting him to be near her. She was

supposed to be strong...supposed to be *his* guide and teacher. This

was unseemly.

"Jadzia," Julian said, catching her face with his soft, warm hand

and pulling her face to meet his. "Jadzia, you tell yourself

this...that it is your duty and all...your training tells you, Teldar

tells you, Dax tells you...but does Jadzia Dax believe them? Does she

want to be Teldar's wife?"

Guiltily, she closed her eyes. "No. I...Jadzia...loved Teldar, but now..."

He got up, and walked away. For a minute, Jadzia thought he was

leaving. He came back with a handful of tissues. He put them beside her

on the bed, and lightly took her hands in his.

She was amazed at the softness of his hands. They were even

softer than the hands of most women. They were warm, too, almost like

a heatpack.

He let her calm down, take a few deep breaths, dry her tears, and

blow her nose. Then, he just held her shoulders as a long jag of

sobbing passed.

Julian was using all his control to keep her at arm's length. He

wanted to just pull her into his arms, but he knew that if he did that,

it would be almost too hard to control himself.

A long silence elapsed. Julian looked at her with an awful

longing in his heart. Gods, she was beautiful, and she was so close.

He had already told her that he loved her, but "love" just wasn't

the word. There was no word to explain the place she filled in his

heart, his gratitude for all she had taught him, the way she haunted

his dreams at night.

Before he knew it, he ran his hand gently over the line of spots

that framed her face and neck, savoring the soft skin beneath his hand.

Jadzia felt the soft, warm touch on her face, her neck, stirring up feelings she thought she had trained out of herself until now. For

an eternity, she stared into the eyes of her friend. Why did she never

notice how beautiful he was until now? Or even stopped to think about

how much he meant to her?

It was wrong to be feeling this way about him - a young man, with

only one chance at life, but he had a way of making her forget all the

training, of opening her eyes to the side she had tried so hard to

train out of herself...what the Program trained out of her, he was

trying to train back in.

And Teldar was so different, a stranger who had known what she

was then, and was indifferent to what she was now. A genetic bond, made

by people she no longer respected, to be honored because her culture

demanded it.

At the same time, she thought about the bond she shared with Julian. The times he was there for her, like that miserable ride to

Trillian when she was on the brink of falling apart due to Joran's

memories, and that terrifying night where Verad tore her apart.

Would Teldar Sobel have stayed by her side? Would he have charged in with Benjamin and blackmailed the Board into saving her life? Would

he have held her hand and fought to save her while a furious Klingon

stood by, ready to kill?

Maybe Teldar, but certainly not Teldar Sobel.

She glanced at his face, trying to picture this human as one of one of her own people. What would have happened if fate had made him

her *j'fall'an?* Oh, if he were! Great Joined Gods...he had proven

himself to her time and again. They'd endured the most horrible things

together, depended on each other, trusted each other...

She had to shake her head to keep from becoming lost any further in the depths of those dark eyes.

The hand that had been tracing her neck rested on her shoulder.

His exotically accented voice was a soft whisper. "Jadzia, what's

wrong?"

"This is," she whispered. "What I feel for you..."

Julian pulled back in shock. "Jadzia! You!" He became nervous.

"I...I sh...should leave."

Leave? No, dear one, don't leave. I want you to stay.

She shook her head "No, Julian. Please, just stay here." and turned to drink in every detail. His dark, wavy hair, those large, dark eyes...his full mouth. "We both know it's wrong. For the longest time, I told myself it was wrong. A Joined is above those feelings..." He put two fingers to her lips, silencing her. "You have a right to your feelings - whatever they are. I've lived with my feelings for four years...I've never acted on them, but I know that they're part of me."

She put her hands on his chest, and bit her lip. "If only...if only things were different. If I wasn't *j'fall'an* - If I wasn't Joined..."

Sapphire eyes met his, and Julian was torn. Part of him wanted to push her away, insist that she marry Teldar, and forget him. Another voice wanted to comfort her, take her in his arms, kiss her, lose himself to expressing the emotions that he had kept to himself so long.

He was completely unprepared when Jadzia's hand brushed his cheek, and her lips touched his. Julian felt shivers go up his spine as she kissed him. He pulled away, not trusting his control.

"Dax..." he whispered. "Please, don't...I -"

She nodded, looking down. "I understand. You don't want this."

He put his hands on her shoulders and just looked at her for the longest time. "No, that isn't it...Oh, Jadzia, you know I love you...that I've always loved you..."

Her sapphire eyes narrowed. "Then why didn't you say anything?"

Why did you wait for so long?"

Julian became annoyed. "You think I *wanted* to keep it to myself? To deny it to the hilt instead of shouting it out at the top of my lungs?"

He shook his head. "At first, it was infatuation...you were right about that. All I wanted was a brief fling and we both knew it. Later on, when I came to realize that I treasured you - I knew that you didn't harbor those same feelings, and I respected you in that regard."

"And you kept it silent."

"Yes, because you meant more to me than just an affair - you are a very important part of my life, and I wouldn't do anything that would hurt you, or cheapen the bond between us - even if it means denying

those feelings I have for you. It's a very small price for respecting

the feelings of a trusted friend."

"But you never objected...Deral, Lenaria..."

"Well," he smiled wickedly. "I'm not exactly living like a monk.

I've had my share, and you know it. As for Deral and Lenaria...I could

understand. I've nearly abandoned my dreams to marry a woman I

loved..." His voice dropped. "Or thought I loved."

"It's amazing why you still care about me. You've given so much,

taken so much abuse from me..."

"Jadzia, don't. For the longest time, I wondered why you put up with *me,* my stuttering about, the hopeless infatuation..."

Jadzia laughed, but then stopped once she met his eyes. They

were

burning with an unasked question, and his hand was wrapped around the

back of her neck.

He returned her kiss, lingering more this time.

He could feel her relax under his hands. How he'd dreamed of this

- but this wasn't right. She was to be another man's wife, and she was

a friend. Was what he wanted fair to her?

He wanted her. Gods, ever since she sat next to him on the ship

bringing them both here. He had come to appreciate her mind, her

incredible beauty, her daring spirit, her strength and courage. All the

things Teldar Sobel didn't seem to notice. Things that perhaps the

Trill did not appreciate, but a human could...

Her hands had wrapped around him, rubbing down his back. Undoing

her barrette, and letting the raven silk of her hair cascade loosely,

he relaxed, despite himself, letting himself inhale the scent of her

hair, enjoy the wonderful feelings she was stirring up. Oh, it felt so

good...and so wrong at the same time! When she broke off the kiss, he

pulled away, feeling his fear return.

"Jadzia...Please...I..." He swallowed and tried to find any

coherent words in the disorder that used to be his mind. "You know I

want this, but...you!" He could feel the blush spreading over his face.

"You...you don't need me. You're my friend, and I don't want to hurt

you, so if this is out of sympathy..."

"No, beloved," she whispered. "I am so scared to admit this..."

she looked down. "You see, it's wrong for me to feel this way about you

- to care about you as anything beyond a student. After a lifetime of

being told that my duty is to guide and teach you...and that any other

feelings were wrong - shameful. That was trained into me before and

after I was Joined. To love someone like you - someone who my society

tells me to teach - on my homeworld, that's scandalous...immoral."

Julian's eyes narrowed - he respected Jadzia, so he never did

tell her about the deep contempt he felt for her culture's attitudes.

Ten minutes on Trill, and he was thanking the Gods that he was born

human.

She shook her head, and looked to him. "Oh, I could deny any

feelings I had, like I was trained to, or try to escape my duty - like

with Deral and Lenaria - but I can't run any more. I don't want to run,

Julian." She swallowed hard, and her icy hand ran down his neck,

sending pleasant shivers through him. "I want you to teach me..."

In an instant, all the reasons why this was wrong...all the

excuses both of them had made to avoid this...the excuses of Training,

of status, of the lie that it was "only friendship," all vanished as

their mouths met with shared passion, and their hands tugged at the

other's oh-so-inconvenient clothing.

She had undone his uniform first. Stripping him to the waist, she

started to to explore him with her lips and hands, kissing down

his

neck and shoulders, massaging places that made him tense up in delight.

And he was slowly wrecking havoc on her senses, his hand under the

turtlenecked undershirt of her uniform. Running a single, fire-hot

finger down her spine, Jadzia gasped and shot up.

"Julian! Oh, Gods..."

He grinned wickedly, then pulled his hand out of her uniform.

Slowly, exploring the curves of her body as he tugged, he pulled off

her uniform. She was strong, her well-defined muscles were hidden by

her uniform. With a lighthearted streak, he noticed that, indeed, her

"freckles" did go "all the way down." Energetically, and without

ceremony, Jadzia pushed him down to her bed and pulled off his uniform.

His skin was the same brown sugar color as his hands, and equally

soft and smooth. He was slighter than he looked (and that was an

accomplishment), his frame birdlike in its seeming fragility. He was

well-muscled, though, his body that of an athlete.

Realizing that they were both naked, a sense of wonder and

reverence filled Julian. He sat up, gathered her in his arms, and

devoured her mouth.

With shock, he felt the squirming against his stomach. Breaking

off his kiss, he heard her gasp. Looking down, he could see the

stirring in her abdomen.

Jadzia reached out and grabbed his wrist. Placing his hand on her

belly, and keeping her other arm tightly locked around his neck,
she

stared him in the eye when he looked up.

"Don't be afraid of it, Julian...it's only me in there...only
part of me."

He closed his eyes for an instant, conscious of her body
against

his, the gentle squirming in her abdomen, and her words.

"I'm not afraid of you, Dax..." he murmured, surprised by
the

thickness of his own voice. "I could never be afraid of you..."

His kiss was strong, passionate, and his arms wrapped tightly
around her, pulling her gently to her bed.

She returned his passion, measure for measure. With lips and
hands, they continued to explore every centimeter, every contour
of

each other, until they were completely lost in the dizzying,
blissful

union of their bodies, minds, and spirits...

From netcom.com!ix.netcom.com!netnews Tue Nov 28 16:11:16 1995

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Path: netcom.com!ix.netcom.com!netnews

From: allronix@ix.netcom.com (Jessica Krucek)

Newsgroups: alt.startrek.creative

Subject: "Compatability Factor" (DS9, J/J PG-13) 8/9

Date: 28 Nov 1995 06:30:58 GMT

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Part 8

Kiss the Future

"Heart, are you still beating? Is there enough of you left to

break?"

- Laura Brannigan "Heart"

The next day, Jadzia's hands searched out the space beside her,

finding only a warm, but empty place beside her.

Opening her eyes, she found that he was gone, but that there was a PADD and a Coultish Rose on the pillow, the petals streaked with its

unique combination of sunlight and scarlet streaked petals. The rich

red and cheerful yellow were beautiful contrasts, but yet beautifully

matched.

Picking up the PADD, she read the note Julian had left.

**Jadzia,

The wealth of the Galaxy is nothing compared to the gift you gave me last night. I will never forget the things you taught me - your

strength, discipline, and courage have helped me find my own. In return,

all I can give you is my love. Teldar Sobel is a far luckier man than

he realizes. I hope he takes good care of you, as I'm sure you will

take care of him.

When we came to DS9, I thought about building a name for myself.

As time went on, I started to think in terms of building a future here.

I often dreamt that you and I would build that future together, not as

friends or even lovers, but as husband and wife.

(Rather silly dream, isn't it?)

You will always have a place in my heart and memory, beloved,
but

for the sake of Teldar, it would be best for you to forget me. May
your

life be a good one.

Farewell,

Julian**

Roses. On Earth, they were used to express deep emotions.
After

requesting the information on the customs of Julian's homeworld,
she

fingered the soft petals.

Yellow roses stood for friendship, and red was the color
symbolizing passion.

* * * *

Julian sat on Miles's couch. "C'mon," the Irishman said, shaking
the shoulder of his friend. "Look a little lively, eh. It's
Dax's

wedding. It's supposed to be joyful, but you look like you've just
lost

your best friend."

Julian peeked up, and opened one eye quizzically. "Last time I
was thinking about that was on T'lani 3."

"Well, then, what's wrong? I mean, she does want you to
be

there."

"I'm not so sure of that. Not any more..."

"Julian, stop talking in riddles. I've had about as much as I
can

take of it. Just come out and say it."

Julian groaned. "Chief, I did something incredibly stupid."

"What was that?"

"Chief...Jadzia and I...Oh, I was very stupid..."

"You and she got into a quarrel, that it?"

"No. Wish it was a quarrel...Had a very good row with Sobel...Why

did it happen now? I never..."

Miles appraised Julian, trying to find out what "it" was. Oh,

no...it couldn't be *that* - could it?

"You and she...were together?"

Julian reluctantly nodded.

Sinking into a chair, Miles whispered. "Holy Mary..."

"I don't really know what happened. We were alone, Teldar and Jadzia had gotten into a quarrel, I was comforting her...I haven't the

vaguest idea when we lost control of ourselves."

"Did you seduce her?"

"*Of course not!* At least, I don't...I don't know."

Miles shook his head. "Right now, you'd probably take a Jem'Hadar

invasion over watching Dax get married. I'll tell her that you aren't-"

"No," Julian said firmly. "She asked me to be part of this. She is marrying Teldar out of duty and..." Julian's voice was barely above

a whisper. "I will attend - out of duty."

"Julian, she'll understand. I can fill in for you as *kelan,* and

Jake can take my place. We learned because there might be an

emergency..."

Julian stood up, shakily. "This is something I'll have to accept.

Avoiding the wedding won't make it easier."

Miles made one last offer. "Julian, after the wedding...we can just slip out. I think I'll start thinking about Keiko, and I could use

some company..." a surreptitious glance back to the wooden cabinet told

Julian that Miles was offering not only companionship, but something to

help drown the sorrow in.

"Of course." There was a glint of gratitude in Julian's shadowed

eyes.

The Bajoran Temple had been converted (with only minor complaints) into a wedding hall. Now all Ben had to do was make sure

everyone was ready.

When he entered Jadzia's quarters, though, he was very surprised.

Ben had never seen Jadzia so quiet, and there were only a few times when he'd seen Curzon silent.

She knelt before the small altar she had set up on her table.

Icons depicting the many Gods of Trill were carefully arranged on it.

The room was so silent that all Ben could hear was his own breath, and

the normally inaudible hum of life-support equipment. The edge of her

dress uniform fell to the floor.

"Dax..." he said quietly.

She turned around swiftly, and Ben reflectively took a step back.

"Dax, it's almost time. Everyone's gathering at the Temple right now."

The expression on her face was as unreadable as her voice.

"Benjamin, do you think I should go through with this?"

Ben laughed lightheartedly. "You know, I remember when you and

Commander Jansen had to practically push me down the aisle. You know

that I got the worst case of cold feet when I took a long look at

Jennifer."

"I was pushing you because I was leaning on you for support!

Curzon was so hung over from the bachelor party that he could barely

stand!"

"Let me guess, Dax, you're getting cold feet."

For an instant, her inscrutable face twisted into an expression of sheer guilt and despair. She caught it before Ben could say

anything.

"Yes...Yes, that's it."

That's only what you're going to tell me, Ben thought in

frustration. *Damn you, Dax, I know something else is bothering you...*

"What else is behind this, Jadzia?"

She looked up. Ben called her by her Host-name very rarely.

Still, she didn't want him to know the real reason why she wanted out

of the *j'fall'an*-bond. It would not only cause her embarrassment and

shame, but it would betray Julian...

"Nothing...important," she said. Her voice was so feeble that not

even she believed the lie.

Benjamin looked at Jadzia's hair. Woven in the elaborate braid of

her hair was a yellow and red rose.

"That rose is pretty. Where'd you find it?"

"Julian," she whispered. "Julian...gave it to me."

Standing stiffly, she walked to the door before Benjamin could say another word.

* * * *

The Temple looked fabulous. The guests were gathered. Odo stood

stiffly in the back of the room and Nerys stood next to him, both of

them dressed in the midnight blue of the Bajoran guard's rarely-seen

dress uniform.

For his part, Worf was very annoyed, eyeing his chronometer and

adjusting his honor band, then straightening rigidly.

Miles tapped out the beat of an Irish ballad with his foot out of

nervousness and frustration. Out the corner of his eye, he studied the

room, searching out for Julian who seemed to have all but vanished.

Not that I can blame him, Miles thought with a frown. *If I was

about to see Keiko walking off with another man...*

Miles shook his head. It was upsetting enough with his wife and

daughter living on Bajor, away from him. What Julian was going through

right now, Miles wouldn't wish on anyone. He'd be kissing the whiskey

stash good-bye tonight.

The door hissed open. A Guardian-Priestess in purple ceremonial

robes walked slowly in, with Ben Sisko at her side. They took their

places behind the altar, the figures of Kele and Tosa directly in front

of them.

Miles watched as the door slid open again, bringing Teldar Sobel,

and a Trill man Miles had never seen.

"Are you sure you want to go through with this?" Jadzia asked.

His voice was hollow. "I'm sure."

They were trying to avoid looking at each other, trying to

ignore

everything but the ritual. Giving into temptation, Jadzia
glanced

sidelong at Julian.

Images, emotions, events were tumbling around her minds,
juxtaposing themselves, mixing together. Teldar as an Initiate,
Teldar

Sobel, Bajor, Joran's final moments, Julian's eyes, Julian's voice,
his

hands, his lips...

She had never felt this guilty. What had she done to this
trusting, gentle, handsome man? He had given her his trust, and she
had

betrayed it for her own pleasure. He would walk through hell to
help

her, and she had used him. He had given her his heart, and she
was

about to break it.

It struck her that Curzon wouldn't have cared. It had been a
night of good sex...scratch that - *wonderful* sex. Curzon would
have

been glad for the gratification - thanks for the memories, and too
bad

I can't remember your name.

Bitterly, she cursed the part of her that was still Curzon,
that

didn't care. She still wanted Julian, wanted to explore these
new-found

feelings for him, to not run from her people, as she was willing to
do

for other loves, but take the hard way and meet with Disgrace
head-on,

to live with her reduced status, and not opt out. She was ready
to

explain to the Monarchs of Trill and their Board why she was giving
up

her status as a Parent of Trill Society in order to aid Bajor, and
keep

this beautiful human by her side.

Deral, she'd never have to deal with the Board...As for Lenaria
-

deep down, Jadzia knew that Lenaria Kaan would have never taken
exile,

therefore, both of *them* were absolved of wrongdoing. With Deral
or

Lenaria, she wouldn't have to face a life of disgrace or exile -
she

could still be the exalted Jadzia Dax, Parent of Trill - running
from

one impossible union to the next so she would never have to face
the

fact that this station - and the human beside her - meant more to
her

than some oath made as a callow Initiate.

But, in the end, she would honor the damn *j'fall'an.* She
would

never forgive herself. Why should Julian ever forgive her?

It was time to begin. Closing her eyes and summoning as much
control as she could muster, she took Julian's arm and walked into
the
room.

Miles could see the tension in Julian's body, how he
was

concentrating on putting one foot in front of the other and keeping
his

eyes fixed to a spot on the wall.

All Miles could do was watch his friend, and feel his own gut
churn in sympathy.

Teldar's *kelan* had spoken already, praising his work as a
doctor, his dedication to the Trill homeworld...and Miles had tuned
out

the most of it, thinking about the bride...and her *kelan.*

Jadzia also looked miserable. She was walking mechanically, and
her eyes were closed. Miles felt like he had eaten molten

lead.

Watching them walk like prisoners to their execution, wearing matching

finery of twilight blue and black.

Jadzia knelt next to Teldar, and Miles burned with an urge to shove Teldar rudely into the nearest Jeffery's Tube, stuffing Teldar's

friend in with him, then grabbing Julian, and forcing him to kneel in

Teldar's place while Miles spoke as his *kelan.*

Ah, but tradition was to be *respected...*

Respect, my eye.

Julian's vocal cords were tight. What in hell could he say? Where to start? How could he even speak without making a fool of himself?

He closed his eyes. Deep breath in, hold, then exhale.

Julian opened his eyes. The first thing he saw was the rose he left for her - braided into her hair.

Swallowing hard, he began, the words alternately tumbling from his mouth, and pulled from him.

"Jadzia Dax has been a dear friend for four years. During that time, we have seen this station go from a beat-up Cardassian ruin to a

thriving port-of-call." Julian took a deep breath, then continued.

"I was in ruins when I came to this place - my goals thwarted, my

emotions confused, my friends and family out of my life by accident or

by choice. I had no one, nothing but my skills. Jadzia Dax found a

lonely, frightened young man and helped him, tempered him. She saw me

out of the worst period of my life, saw a friend in me when all I saw

in her was a pretty face. She has been a centering force in my

life,

teaching me balance, discipline, and control. I hope that Teldar Sobel

comes to love her...as much as I do."

With that, all chatter in the room came to a dead halt.

Odo

reflectively gripped Nerys's arm. Worf raised his eyebrows and

straightened, adjusting his uniform. Ben glanced sharply at the doctor

in amazement while Teldar glowered menacingly at Jadzia and Julian.

Julian shook his head, looked around, and clamed up.

C'mon, Miles thought. *Go ahead - tell them what you told me!*

When all the shocked glares turned to him, Miles realized that he

had said it aloud.

Julian was the first to gain his composure. Losing all desire to

keep the situation under control, he started to speak again.

"At first, all I saw in her was her physical beauty. Later, as time went on and I came to appreciate the things she was teaching me, I

learned to sort out my physical desire from love. When she taught me

control, she also taught me what it was to love someone on a level

above the physical. I learned to respect her, to care about *her*

desires, to appreciate her company as a friend and teacher. I love her

with all my heart and spirit, more than anyone in this entire

universe..."

Jadzia looked up at him, astonished and speechless. His eyes,

though, were focused on Teldar.

"That is why I speak for her as *kelan.* Sobel, I want you to know and appreciate her for the woman she is. Her wish is to marry you, and help you build a better future on your world. As such, I give her-"

Jadzia bolted up, grabbing Julian's arm. "No, don't!"

The Guardian-Priestess was scandalized, Teldar was furious, and the rest of the room was too stunned to speak.

"I call a recess to this ceremony!" the Guardian-Priestess said.

"The *j'fall'an* will discuss the matter among themselves."

"I'm sorry..." said Julian, stumbling over words, fevrently

regretting his earlier speech.

"The *kelan* will not disrupt the ceremony further!" she said, as

she hustled Jadzia and Teldar into a room just off the temple. She,

Ben, and Teldar's people vanished out the main entrance.

The whole room was still speechless, Julian included. It seemed as though time was frozen for a few seconds. Then, Miles Edward O'Brien

did the first thing that came to his mind.

He started clapping.

Odo followed, then Nerys, then Quark and Worf. Soon, the whole room was applauding.

Worf looked over to Miles. "Did Bashir actually say those words to you?"

Miles shook his head. "No. Damn good speech, eh?"

The Klingon nodded. "Agreed." Walking up to the confused human in

the center of the room, Worf nodded. "Good speech, worthy of a poem."

Julian sighed, looking to the floor. "I'm afraid I've made a fool

of myself, and of Jadzia."

Worf was confused. "But it was a most honorable expression of your feelings for her...if indeed you feel that way."

Julian slumped. "Yes, I do, but don't Klingons have a tradition of dueling for their mates in situations like this?"

"That is not the Klingon way when it comes to mates. Dueling is

unacceptable in this matter. The woman must choose you. Klingon men do

not fight for their women," Worf said proudly. "We beg for them."

"And I did a passing job of begging?"

"Admirable. Worthy of a Master Bard. It is unfortunate you chose

medicine, and not poetry."

"Uh...Thanks,
Worf."

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Path: netcom.com!ix.netcom.com!netnews

From: allronix@ix.netcom.com (Jessica Krucek)

Newsgroups: alt.startrek.creative

Subject: "Compatability Factor" (DS9 J/J PG-13) 9/9 END!!!

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Organization: Netcom

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Part 9

Yesterday's Gone

"Your past life don't suit you. Take my hand - Kiss the Future"

- Human League "Kiss the Future"

"How could you let him disrupt the *j'fall'an* like that? I don't

care if he is human, what he did is intolerable...And then you...you

encouraging him!"

"Teldar!"

"He is a small-minded, limited human. How could you let yourself go like that! What in Tosa's name do you see in that fool?"

Jadzia was finally angry. "I don't remember asking *your* opinion

for anything, Teldar. I don't like the way you've treated him. Ever

since you got here, you've been rude, condensending, and arrogant. I

think he's got a greater understanding than you give him credit for."

"Do you love him? Did you ignore your training that much?"

"Yes, I love him."

"How could you? Someone like him...that's acceptable for a physical affair. I could accept that, but anything else? He is so much

lower than you, Jadzia!"

"He is not 'lower,' Teldar. You are so narrow in your view. There is truth outside the Symbiosis Board and Monarchs."

"The Board knew what they were doing when they matched us. Don't you believe *any* of the things you swore to me? In the blessing the

Joined Gods put on us?"

"No, Teldar." Jadzia's voice was a whisper. "I can't. I don't

believe that this is right for us. I can go up to the

Guardian-Priestess and tell her that I believe the Joined Gods have

blessed us...but it would be a lie."

Teldar said, like an automaton, "But the Board is the highest truth of our world..."

Jadzia shook her head. "No, it isn't. They have lied, Teldar. To me, about what I am, about the honor of Joining, about what the

j'fall'an bond means. Maybe in the Beginning, they were valid...maybe

five thousand years ago, they were needed. They aren't needed now."

"Are you willing to accept the Disgrace? You may be free to commit yourself to Bajor, but Trill will lose a mother - a mother with

seven lifetimes to draw on. Trillian needs you, Jadzia Dax."

"Trillian isn't what I once believed it to be. They lied to all our people. So many are dying for this lie. Candidates who take their

own lives. Talented children who are ignored because of their genetic

inheritance. The total control of the Board -"

She straight into Teldar's eyes, furious. "And your research - you *know* the truth. *J'fall'an* is a tradition, nothing more."

Teldar shook his head. "The truth doesn't matter. Not to anyone on Trillian. Your human and Bajoran associates may care about it, your

dear Julian may believe it, I care about your duty - *our* duty, the

things Jadzia and Teldar swore as Initiates. Like it or not, we have to

honor this, or be Disgraced."

Jadzia reached out to touch Teldar's shoulder, but when she looked into his eyes, she saw how little of her Teldar was still there.

Dimly, she realized that little was left of Jadzia, the woman she was.

Very little of her innocence, her blind obedience, her faith remained.

Had it been worth the price?

She pulled her hand away. "It wasn't worth the price, Teldar. To

continue my service to Trillian is only to continue the lies they've

told to all our people. You've seen the facts. Your facts stand only by

their narrow range, enlarging the picture makes it a lie. If the truth

isn't important to you, then neither is the *'j'fall'an.* One day, the

truth will come out. You can't silence something like that for long. As

you've said, people are beginning to speak out. You can exile them, or

even kill them, but you won't silence them."

"And you are willing to be Disgraced? To have your own people

turn their backs to you? To no longer be welcomed as a Joined, but to

be an outcast?"

"If the price for the truth is my Disgrace, Teldar, then yes. My

first duty is to the truth - as a scientist, as a Starfleet officer,

and as a Joined."

Teldar was silent for a long time. He walked around the room,

finally winding up at her shelf, idly fingering the keyboard. "The

Truth is the First Light. Hold to the Lights...You are right. Our duty

is to the truth, isn't it?"

Jadzia walked over to Teldar, but he put out his arm as a sign

for her not to come near. "With my work, I was hoping to squelch the

rumors, to prove that the Board's truth was the only truth." He looked

up at her. "But it wasn't. I came here hoping to find someone who would

remind me of my duties to Trillian - someone who was a Proper Joined.

Someone who could let me lie and not regret it."

"I came up with the same conclusions Doctor Bashir did...three

months ago. I'm already skirting Disgrace on Trillian for my work." He

shook his head in disgust. "Reflectively, I worked my hardest to prove

myself to them, be the perfect Joined. I was hoping to find something -

anything that will let the Board's position stand, honor the J'fall'an

bond...restore my good name."

"Teldar..."

He ran his fingers through her black hair and said tenderly,

"Jadzia, this has very little to do with you directly. Even if I hadn't

told you this, you would still want to Disgrace yourself by breaking

the bond. I should have realized that I couldn't use you as a shield."

"But where will you go?"

Teldar frowned. "To Vulcan. There is an opening for a genetic

biologist at the Vulcan Science Academy. That where you and I were

going to go, remember?"

"Teldar, you don't have to be Disgraced."

"It won't matter. My work will still be considered subversive,

Kele and Tosa know I've got enough in my files to win me Exile. It's

not going to matter. You aren't going to be able to steer me off

that

path, since you're further down it than I am."

Resentfully, he looked to Jadzia. "Jadzia Dax. *J'fall'an* to Bajor. I hope the both of you are happy."

"The both of us?"

"You and Doctor Bashir," Teldar said bitterly. "May Kele and Tosa

smile on your children..." Teldar left abruptly, giving Jadzia no time

to answer him.

* * * *

Julian watched as Teldar's ship popped into warp and sped away.

What had he done? Teldar and Jadzia had broken the *j'fall'an*

agreement, which meant that they could both be Disgraced. And it all

started when he disrupted the Bonding ceremony.

Jadzia would never trust him again. In fact, she would probably

never be able to forgive him. First, he destroyed her friendship by

making love to her, then he dishonored her in the eyes of her homeworld

by destroying the marriage ceremony.

All Julian could do was to stay still, stay silent, and reflect on the damage he caused.

He loved her, he still did. But she hated him. He'd never hear her say...

"Julian, are you all right?"

He turned around. Jadzia was standing over him, Julian was shocked. What was she doing near him?

"Jadzia...I..."

"It's all right, Julian," She looked down. "Can you forgive me?"

"Forgive you? Jadzia, if anyone should be down on their knees, it's me. I disrupted your wedding, I caused you to be Disgraced."

"Julian, I'm not Disgraced - not right now."

"You're not?"

Her face paled, and she looked away, ashamed. "But Teldar is."

Julian's eyes opened wide. "And you?"

Jadzia sighed. "My status won't be very good. There's a pretty good chance I might be Disgraced myself sometime in the future for

helping him."

Slowly, hesitantly, Julian reached out and brushed his hand along

her neck. "I'm so sorry, Jadzia. So damn sorry."

"It's not your fault. It's no one's fault."

"Jadzia, I disrupted your Bonding. You said yourself that you and

Teldar could be Disgraced if the *j'fall'an* -"

Jadzia cut him off. "Teldar's Disgrace was because he - and I -

chose to reveal the truth. It was over his work. The work you helped

him with. He chose to reveal it to the Symbiosis Board this morning.

They are leaning towards Disgrace. It will probably be official by

tomorrow." She put her hands on his shoulders and turned him to face

her. "You knew the truth when you helped him with the results, and you

chose to stay silent - to protect Teldar and me. In the end, Teldar and

I chose to reveal the truth."

"But if it becomes known...Teldar's results...your society

will..."

Now Jadzia was starrng at the stars. These stars were her home now, Trillian no longer was. Trillian was a place where she no longer belonged.

And Julian could understand.

"My world won't survive much longer. It's survived for five thousand years, but it will die in my lifetime - Jadzia's lifetime.

Truth can destroy, but better a terrible truth than a comfortable lie."

"Werlin Ketel," said Julian. "One of Bajor's greatest philosophers."

"Julian," Jadzia whispered. "Did you lie to me?"

"About wanting to make a life with you here? About being in love

with you? No. Those aren't lies, and -"

"And what?"

"I'm afraid that I've hurt you. That night, the night we..."

Julian cleared his throat. "You don't want a man like me. Someone too

driven by his passions, who only has a limited mind due to his one

life. I can't be your student, Dax...I'll be honest with you. I've

destroyed all the respect I've earned in your eyes. If you want to

leave me..."

Jadzia felt as if she had swallowed a stone. "Julian, does this mean that you want to end our friendship?"

His eyes widened, a horrified emerald flash passing through them.

"NO! Of course not. Jadzia, I love you. I'd be honored if you still..."

She gently pulled his face to hers, her assurance taking the form

of a slow, strong kiss.

When they broke it off, Julian shook his head. "Jadzia, let's be

careful about this. I don't want to have to lose your friendship until

we both are sure that this is what we both want."

Jadzia nodded. "But, if we find ourselves together...Let's not deny it."

"Aye, aye, Commander," Julian teased, tilting his head and returning her kiss.

Across the Promenade, Benjamin Sisko was watching the scene with

mixed emotion.

The Irish brogue was quiet, but Ben could hear it clearly.

"Wonderful, isn't it?"

Ben looked behind him. Miles came to stand next to him.

"I don't know, Chief. Sobel has Disgraced himself, Dax probably will be Disgraced later. If that happens, both the symbionts will most

likely die with Teldar and Jadzia. Sobel's information could cause the

Trill to start questioning all their traditions. That could mean

planet-wide chaos..." Ben watched Jadzia and Julian, then shook his

head in puzzlement. "Now, this with Dax and Doctor Bashir. This flies

in the face of everything Curzon told me to respect about his world.

What do you make of it?"

Miles looked over to Julian, who had put his arm around Jadzia's

waist, and stared out the window at the stars. "I'd say that the two of

them'll be fine. After a while, you might have to marry them off."

"Chief, that's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard!"

"Is it? You and Jennifer weren't 'just friends' at first?"

"Of course we were! For years. Then..."

"Then what?"

Sisko chuckled. "Never mind, Chief. Bashir's going to need a lot of luck. The old man can be quite a handful."

"Handful, nothing. You haven't suffered through over a hundred and fifty games of racquetball with Julian, not to mention darts!"

Sisko laughed. "Come on, Chief. Let's go. They're going to be

fine."

The two men shook their heads and walked in the direction of

Quark's.

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End
file.